

PREVENTING YOUTH GANG PROLIFERATION IN SUFFOLK COUNTY

**SUFFOLK COUNTY
JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COMMISSION**

Robert J. Gaffney
SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE

All gang problems are local in nature.

Local problems require local solutions.

U.S. Dept. of Justice,
*Addressing Community
Gang Problems* (May 1998).

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

ROBERT J. GAFFNEY
SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE

JOSEPH C. MICHAELS
ASSISTANT DEPUTY COUNTY EXECUTIVE

To the Citizens of Suffolk County:

On September 10, 1997, I created the Suffolk County Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission, and charged its members with developing a strategic plan that would significantly reduce youth crime in Suffolk County through the next decade. A necessary component of this plan includes developing a strategy to prevent youth gang proliferation in Suffolk County.

While juvenile crime is on a downward trend, I believe further significant reductions can be fostered with sound planning, proper investment of our financial resources in programs that have a proven track record, and coordinated targeted criminal justice efforts. As a former FBI Agent, I know the value of law enforcement partnerships coming together to carry out a well thought-out plan. In calling for a strategic plan to prevent Juvenile Crime, I wanted both law enforcement and social service experts to identify what we need to do as a County government, and as citizens, to enter the new millennium with a reviewed commitment to safeguard our residents from youth crime.

Early in the planning process, it became apparent that a strategic plan was needed to **prevent youth gang proliferation** in Suffolk County. Once considered mostly an urban phenomenon, youth gangs have become a widespread threat to communities throughout the nation. My objective is to prevent this 'emerging' problem from gaining a foothold in Suffolk County.

The Commission has met my objective. This report represents a comprehensive look at youth gangs in Suffolk County. Not only are the nature and prevalence of youth gangs documented, but effective gang prevention and intervention programs and strategies applicable to Suffolk County are clearly described. Implementation of this action plan is already underway.

I thank the Commission members for the diligent, thoughtful effort in producing this valuable blueprint. It is a practical plan with research-based recommendations that can be used by citizens, communities, municipalities and County agencies seeking to prevent gang related youth crime.

Sincerely,

ROBERT J. GAFFNEY
Suffolk County Executive

PREVENTING YOUTH GANG PROLIFERATION IN SUFFOLK COUNTY

October 1999

**Suffolk County
Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission**

**Robert J. Gaffney
Suffolk County Executive**

Preventing Youth Gang Proliferation in Suffolk County

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SUFFOLK COUNTY JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COMMISSION

SUFFOLK COUNTY JUVENILE CRIME STUDY**

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Preventing Youth Gang Proliferation in Suffolk County

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I. INTRODUCTION

Juvenile gangs, Taggers, Crews, Posses, Street Gangs, Drug Gangs, Satanic Groups, Female Gangs, Stoners, Skinheads, and others represent different types of gangs active throughout the nation. Gangs are not new and have existed in the United States at least since the late 1800's. However, since 1980 youth gangs have enjoyed a robust resurgence in urban areas; and since 1990 have increased dramatically in suburban and rural areas. The gang culture, with its range of dress, symbolism, methods of communication and status have become extremely popular with our youth and is increasingly becoming adopted within the popular culture. Conditions are conducive to rapid expansion.

What exactly are gangs, and should we really be concerned? Even if the number of youth gangs is growing, is gang violence increasing? Wouldn't gang members have committed crimes anyway, even if they didn't belong to a gang? Does being in a gang have a greater impact on youth crime over and above the effect of having delinquent peers? What are gang dynamics? How much of a youth gang problem do we really have in Suffolk County? And if this is a serious or emerging problem, **what can we do** to prevent a more serious gang problem from developing? Although, there have been obtuse and sometimes conflicting answers to these gang-related questions during the last decade, recent research has given us answers to many of these questions. These and other gang related issues will be addressed in this analysis.

The current work represents the third strategic planning report of the Suffolk County Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission, and addresses the problem of **youth gangs in Suffolk County**. The first report, "**Safeguarding Suffolk County for our Youth**" presents the County's blueprint for reducing youth crime over the next decade. The second report, entitled "**Promoting School Safety in Suffolk County**" addresses the emerging problem of school violence, and includes the results of a major survey conducted in the County and published in May 1999. This third report, "**Preventing Youth Gang Proliferation in Suffolk County**", documents the level of youth gang activity in Suffolk County as of September, 1999, and presents a blueprint for action based on valid national, regional and local research. This study specifically focuses on preventing youth gang expansion.

A special note is required. **This report is not a vehicle for glamorizing the specific gangs active in Suffolk County**. Demographic characteristics and profiles of gang members are presented; and statistical data on the number, size and type of active gangs documented. Gang dynamics are also described. However, **specific gangs** are not named. Other police and probation reports, and training material are available for authorized agencies and community groups who need details on **specific** gang characteristics and activities.

This project was jointly undertaken by the Suffolk County Department of Probation and the District Attorney's Office on behalf of the County Executive's Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission in an effort to empirically identify the nature and prevalence of youth gangs in Suffolk County. **The major objective of this effort is to develop an effective strategy that will prevent the proliferation of youth gangs in Suffolk County and to implement that collaborative strategy immediately.**

II. SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

NATIONAL

- 1. The United States is currently experiencing the fourth distinct period of substantial growth in youth gang activity since the 1870's. The previous periods of major youth gang growth and peaks include the 1890's, 1920's and 1960's.**
- 2. The current period of substantially increased youth gang activity began in 1980 in this nation's cities and expanded dramatically in the early 1990's into the nation's suburban and rural areas.**
- 3. Most respondents to the '1996 National Youth Gang Survey', published in July 1999, indicated that their gang problems began quite recently. On average, gangs began to pose a problem in 1989 for large cities, 1990 for suburban counties, 1992 for small cities and 1993 for rural counties.**
- 4. According to the results of this 1996 survey, up to 4,824 jurisdictions experienced gang problems with 31,000 street gangs nationally, and a total membership of nearly 850,000 gang members.**

REGIONAL

- 5. The findings of the 1996 National Youth Gang Survey clearly document that gang activity in the U.S. varies substantially by region with 75% of the West reporting gang activity, as compared to 54% in the Midwest, 50% in the South, and 35% in the Northeast.**
- 6. Most respondents to this national survey from the Northeast cited 1991 as the average year of onset.**

SUFFOLK COUNTY

- 7. As of September 17, 1999, there were 781 Suffolk County residents who were confirmed gang members; verified either by self-admission or gang activity. (Refer to Table 3.)**
- 8. A total of 956 Suffolk County residents have been identified by criminal justice agencies as confirmed or suspected gang members, as of 9/17/99. This total represents less than one out of one-thousand residents who have been identified as suspected or confirmed gang members. (Refer to Tables 3 & 4.)**
- 9. As of September 1999, a total of 1,401 residents and non-residents have been identified as confirmed or suspected gang members in Suffolk**

County. Out of the **1,401** total, **956** or **68.2%** are confirmed Suffolk County residents, while **210** or 15% have ‘Out-of-County’ residences, and **235** or 16.8% have no known address as of 9/17/99. (Refer to Table 4.)

10. **There are 8 major gangs and 23 minor gangs, posses, crews or cliques currently confirmed as active in Suffolk County.** (Refer to Table 6.)
11. **Of the eight (8) major gangs, four (4) or 50% have confirmed membership totals of 100 or more recorded in the Interagency/Probation Gang Database.** Resident membership totals for the eight major gangs active in Suffolk County are as follows: 233, 176, 120, 115, 89, 34, 31, and 10. Therefore a total of **808**, out of **956** resident gang members or **84.5%** belong to a major gang.
12. **Of the 210 ‘Out-of-County’ gang residents identified by criminal justice agencies, 209 or 99.5% belong to one of the eight major gangs.** However, the extent that gang migration contributes to youth gang proliferation in Suffolk County is not clear at this time.
13. **Currently, 193 or 20.2% of the confirmed or suspected gang residents are sentenced to probation and receiving juvenile or adult supervision services.** Of the **193** gang probationer population, 99% are male, 96.9% are 16 years old or older and 88.1% have been sentenced to probation by the Criminal Courts.
14. **There is a moderate amount of diversity among Suffolk County gangs, although most of gangs are street gangs comprised of male, minority members between the ages of 16 and 24 years old.** No female or strictly juvenile gangs are identified in the database. However, rivalry clearly exists between some of the eight major gangs and is the source of some violence. The existing gang database also does not contain evidence of Asian gangs, Native American gangs, Russian gangs or Stoners.
15. **An in-depth profile of Suffolk County’s resident youth gang members sentenced to probation describe multi-problem youth, residing in multi-problem families with evidence of substantial substance abuse, school problems, mental illness and a history of out-of-home placements.**

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the profile sample gang members are high school dropouts, only 10% live with both parents; 26% have experienced the death of a close family member; 34% have at least one mental health diagnosis; and 88% live with one or more siblings.

16. **Out of the representative sample of probationer gang members, 52% were arrested for a violent offense and 61% of those committed the crime with one or more co-defendants.** Also, 69% of the violent offenders were high

school dropouts and 38.5% of the violent offenders used a firearm in the commission of the crime.

17. **The number of current gang related crimes, and relevant prior year baseline data for Suffolk County are not available at this time.**

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

18. **Although less than one out of one-thousand County residents are currently gang members, (956 out of @ 1.4 million), sufficient evidence exists that youth gang proliferation is increasing in Suffolk County and conditions are conducive to further expansion.**
19. **Risk factors for gang membership are very similar to the predictive risk factors of youth violence, crime and delinquency.** Researchers have found predictive risk factors for youth gang membership in the five domains of community, peers, individuals, family and school.
20. **According to the results of the 1999 Rochester Youth Development Study, which is investigating the causes and consequences of adolescent delinquency, gang membership had a strong impact on the incidence of violent behavior even when other risk factors (such as poverty and delinquent peers) were held constant.** This indicates that the high rates of violence by gang members were not simply the result of the accumulation of risk in their backgrounds.
21. **The results of NIJ's 1998 Comparative Study of Criminal Behavior, Youth Gangs and At-Risk Youth suggest that the criminal careers of gang members begin with property offenses (e.g. auto theft, burglary) and progress within 1.5 to 2 years to drug-related crime and violent crime.** The data suggest that an important opportunity exists for aggressive intervention during the early years of gang involvement.
22. **Most significantly, the NIJ research found that contrary to popular belief, youths can resist overtures to join a gang without serious reprisals; and when reprisals did occur, they were milder than the assaults endured by youths during their gang initiation.** These findings provide an important component for gang prevention programs for at-risk groups.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

23. **Promising approaches to prevent youth gang proliferation include Strategic Planning, the Gang Suppression Prototype, Prevention and Intervention Models, and OJJDP's Comprehensive Strategy.** Suffolk County has embarked on a comprehensive strategy that incorporates the key influences of family, school, and community and emphasizes

protective and risk factors. This approach uses strategic planning and incorporates suppression, prevention, and intervention components into the overall design.

24. Current Suffolk County Anti-Gang Initiatives include the following:

- A. The Gang Reduction Intervention Project (GRIP);**
- B. A County-wide Gang Intelligence Network;**
- C. Fast Track Prosecution;**
- D. the Probation Gang Awareness Training Program;**
- E. an Interagency Gang Task Force;**
- F. the Anti-Graffiti Task Force; and**
- G. The Youth Crime Research and Planning Unit.**

25. There are two major phases of the work of the Suffolk County Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission: strategic planning and implementation. The initial planning phase is complete. The next phase will continue throughout 1999 and 2000 and will involve facilitating implementation of the action plan that is designated to reduce youth crime and prevent youth gang proliferation. Another objective is to conduct additional research regarding gang dynamics and program effectiveness.

III. ADDRESSING GANG PROBLEMS THROUGH STRATEGIC PLANNING

SUFFOLK COUNTY'S STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

*Gangs are a result and a side effect,
not a cause of our problems.*

Anita Benavides,
Austin Project – 1998

1. LOCAL CONSIDERATION

Many experts in the criminal justice field agree that there are a myriad of socio-economic factors that contribute to the rising incidence of juvenile criminal behavior. A study conducted by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development focused on children aged 10-14.¹ This study reports that societal changes have left the youthful population with less adult supervision while subjecting them to growing pressure to experiment with drugs, engage in sex, and turn to violence when resolving conflicts. The adolescent years have always been a tumultuous stage in life due to emotional, psychological, and physiological changes brought on by puberty. But, young adolescents are even more vulnerable in recent years due to the dramatic decrease in hours under adult supervision. The increasing number of single parent families and families with two working parents has more than doubled over the last twenty years. The lack of consistent adult supervision has contributed to the rate of criminally violent behavior, as evidenced by the increasing number of teen suicides, homicides, gang-related activity and weapons possessions.

The Long Island region, and specifically Suffolk County during the last decade, has also experienced a rise in adolescent social and criminal misconduct. Suffolk County offers significant challenges to any agency trying to meet the needs of its large and diverse population, and the at-risk adolescent population is a particularly difficult population that is susceptible to gang involvement.

Suffolk County's 1990 census population was 1,321,977 and increased to 1,342,637 as of January 1, 1996. According to the 1990 census, 387,655 youths under the age of 21 reside in Suffolk County. Suffolk's population is ethnically, culturally and socio-economically diverse, with significant representation of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian residents, as well as a sizable migrant population on the East End. There was a 15.6% increase from 1980 to 1990 in the African American population (a total of 82,910), 49% increase in the Hispanic population (87,852), and 31% increase in Native Americans (2,947). Suffolk County has the largest Hispanic population of any county in New York State outside New York City. In 1990, 14.4% of

¹ Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, as reported in Newsday, October 12, 1995.

This strategy includes prevention, intervention and suppression components, all working together in a community-wide collaborative effort.

Hispanics between the ages of 5 and 17 spoke English “not well” or “not at all”. Without a doubt, Suffolk County has an extremely diverse, youthful and constantly changing population and the geographic expanse of the County makes the delivery of services difficult.

In response to these conditions, on September 10, 1997, County Executive Robert J. Gaffney created the Suffolk County Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission, and charged its members with developing a strategic plan that would significantly increase youth wellness and reduce youth crime in Suffolk County over the next decade.

Commission members include representatives from youth services, probation, law enforcement, social services, legal services, the legislature, corrections, health services, education, government, citizen groups, as well as public and private service providers. The Commission’s tasks include addressing youth violence, school crime, gang activity, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual offenses, as well as assessing detention needs. The overall strategy is to document the nature and prevalence of youth crime in Suffolk County, identify historical trends, evaluate system effectiveness, analyze exemplary programs nationally, and develop recommendations for needed change. This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Commission, which represent a blueprint that will prevent youth gang proliferation in Suffolk County when implemented.

During the last decade, Suffolk County has undertaken substantial initiatives to address the problem of juvenile crime and violence in the County, including the development of a graduated system of sanctions and alternatives to institutionalization. The current strategy represents a comprehensive approach which adds to previous efforts by emphasizing prevention, and addresses risk factors in the four domains of the individual, the family, the school and the community. Since these four domains are interrelated, consideration has to be given to the impact that action in one domain has on the others.

Therefore, the strategy of the Suffolk Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission is to identify the risk factors in Suffolk County as compared to national risk factors for each of the four domains. This approach assumes that resources will be directed to those programs which deal with these risk factors, or with protective factors, which reduce the risks. National research has revealed that reducing these risk factors, and/or increasing these protective factors, reduces the incidence and severity of juvenile crime, as well as youth gang activity.

In addition, the strategic plan to prevent youth gang proliferation involves implementing a comprehensive community-wide gang control strategy. This strategy includes prevention, intervention, and suppression components, all working together in a community-wide, collaborative effort.

2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

Urban street-gang involvement in drug trafficking and violent crime is becoming increasingly widespread - not just in large cities, but in suburban areas and small towns as well.

Nancy E. Gist
Director, Bureau of Justice Assistance

The youth gang problem in the United States has become an important policy issue in the 1990's, largely because of the increasing youth gang violence and the apparent proliferation of youth gangs throughout all sectors of the nation. What was primarily an urban phenomenon in the 1980's, expanded dramatically to suburban and rural jurisdictions in the 1990's.

Based on the **1996 National Youth Gang Survey**, it was estimated that there were **4,824** jurisdictions in the nation with active youth gangs in 1996. Estimates indicate that there were **30,818** gangs and **846,428** gang members active throughout the country with **57** percent of suburban counties and **25** percent of rural counties experiencing gang problems. The results of this survey indicate that the youth gang problem has increased dramatically in recent years with the potential for further substantive expansion in communities of all sizes and types.

In the midst of the rapid expansion of youth gangs in the 1980's and 1990's, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the United States Department of Justice (OJJDP) issued an important policy paper in 1993 that synthesized the best national-level thinking about comprehensive approaches to prevent, and control, serious and violent youth crime. *The Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* points out key research findings and specified a number of critical policy assumptions to guide effective programming. The strategy is guided by five general principles:

...the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) developed a specific strategy aimed at combating gang related activity while incorporating both crime prevention and crime control initiatives.

- Strengthen the family in its role to instill moral principles and provide guidance and support to children;
- Support core social institutions in their roles to develop capable, mature and responsible youths;
- Prevent delinquency, because prevention is the most cost effective approach to combating youth crime;
- Intervene immediately and effectively when delinquent behavior is first manifested; and

- Control and identify the small group of serious, violent and chronic offenders through a range of graduated sanctions, including placement in secure facilities.

The strategy rests on a risk-focused prevention model which is based on known risk factors in a community. The strategy leads community leaders to identify priorities for reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors for at-risk youth. The risk factors are grouped in the four areas, or domains, in which youth experience them: individual, community, family, and school. Protective factors buffer children from the dangers associated with the risk factors. These include personal characteristics of the individual, social bonding, a system of healthy beliefs, clear standards for behavior, and involvement with community assets. It is crucial that protective factors are identified in programs serving children. This focus improves the community's effort to protect children against the effects of exposure to risk factors and helps community leaders assess the effectiveness of programs for children.

Complementing the risk-focused prevention approach is a risk-focused continuum of sanctions for juvenile offenders. The continuum of sanctions covers immediate responses for minor misconduct, an array of intermediate sanctions for serious habitual offenders, and secure treatment programs for the violent few.

Operating within the framework of this comprehensive programming strategy, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) developed a specific strategy aimed at combating gang related activity which incorporates both crime prevention and crime control initiatives. Both components are needed over long periods of time in order to be effective.

IV. SOCIOLOGY OF YOUTH GANGS

We can expect a conscience of every child. We don't have to build it in. All we have to do is arrange the environment so they don't lose it.

Jerome Kagan

1. BASIC FACTS ABOUT GANGS

...urban settings experience far greater gang involvement than suburban and rural areas.

What is a gang?

There is no one accepted or straightforward definition of a gang. The public and media use the term “gang” more loosely than those in the criminal justice system. In addition, State and local jurisdictions often develop their own definition which adds to the difficulty in measuring the size of the problem. There is currently a lack of a standardized definition of a gang.

In response to this difficulty, the U.S. Department of Justice is attempting to clarify the definition of a gang in general and youth gangs in particular. As a result, the following definition was developed:

“a youth gang is commonly thought of as a self-formed association of peers having the following characteristics: a gang name and recognizable symbols, identifiable leadership, a geographic territory, a regular meeting pattern, and collective actions to carry out illegal activities.” (Howell, 1997).

Most **gang members** define their gang along one or two basic definitional lines: (1) involvement in crime, or (2) the affiliational and cultural aspects of gang membership that make it like a family in the eyes of many members. (Curry & Decker, 1998).

What percentage of adolescents join gangs?

Gang involvement varies by the type of locality with urban settings experiencing far greater gang involvement than suburban and rural areas. Recent national surveys indicate that from 14% to 30% of adolescents join gangs at some point. Most youth gang members are young adults. The age range of youth gang members is about 11 to 24; membership is expanding at the top and the bottom of the age range, but mainly at the top. (Howell, 1997).

“Gangs fill a void. If you don’t want gangs, then you have to fill the void with something meaningful.”

**Jen Golbin
Social Worker**

Why do kids join gangs?

There are many reasons why kids join gangs and sometimes the adolescent doesn’t exactly know why. However, some of the more common reasons include:

1. To experience a **sense of family, belonging or fellowship**;
2. To gain **respect, a positive self-image, status** ;
3. To experience **power and control** in their lives;
4. To realize **financial gain**;
5. For **excitement and fun**; and other **social gains** ;
6. For **protection** from neighborhood or rival gang violence;
7. Because of **recruitment intimidation**;
8. Because it’s a **family tradition**;
9. Due to **peer pressure** ; and
10. Because **the dangers of gang involvement are not understood**.

Who joins gangs?

Most gang members are young adults, although ages range between 11-24 generally. The vast majority of gang members (71%) are reported to be between 15 and 24 years old. (1996 National Youth Gang Survey, 1999) Profiles of gang members indicate that gang members often have many of the following characteristics: low self-esteem, dysfunctional families, poor school performance, exhibit early behavioral problems, are unemployed, poor, often feel unloved at home, and have poor interpersonal skills. There is often a history of abuse or neglect.

Apparently, the United States has seen a rapid proliferation of youth gangs since 1980.

Is the youth gang problem growing?

Apparently, the United States has seen a rapid proliferation of young gangs since 1980. The 1996 National Youth Gang Survey indicates that in 1996 there were 30,818 gangs and 846,428 active members nationally. Gang activity was reported in 74 percent of large cities, 57 percent of suburban counties, 34 percent of small cities and 25 percent of rural counties. Steady expansion is predicted for the foreseeable future.

Is it against the law to belong to a gang?

No, it’s not against the law to join or belong to a gang. However, gang membership often leads to the commission of crimes and subsequent arrest.

Is it easy to leave a gang once you are a member?

The answer depends on the type of gang that an individual has joined. It’s difficult to leave one of the highly organized, major street or drug gangs

Today's specific type of youth gang has existed in the United States since at least the 1870.s.

because members must give total allegiance to the gang. **“Blood In, Blood Out”**, signifies gang membership until death and applies to all of the major gangs. Preventing a youngster from joining a gang is far less complicated than leaving a gang once allegiance has been pledged. However, recent research indicates that many gang members can typically leave the gang without major consequences. Depending upon the type of gang, and particular gang in question, consequences of attempting to quit range from minor (with some loosely structured gangs and posses) to extreme violence (with highly structured street gangs).

2. HISTORY OF GANGS

There is evidence of various kinds of gang involvement throughout this nation's history. Today's specific type of youth gang has existed in the United States since at least the 1870's, and since that time there have been four distinct periods of growth and peaks.

The first peak was in the 1890's when organized adolescent groups roamed major cities and engaged in petty forms of property crime, as well as violence against one another and rival gangs. These youth gang members were comprised of individuals from the bottom of the economic and cultural scale at that time. (Curry & Decker, 1998)

The next generation of youth gangs in the United States emerged in the 1920's at approximately the same time that adult corporate gangs and organized crime expanded their influence. However, the 1920's youth gangs were different from the adult gangs. They were primarily comprised of the children of first generation immigrants and these gangs were more actively involved in crime than their 1800's counterparts and were characterized by turf protection, violence and property crimes. Frederick Thrasher was the first to document this gang type in his 1927 study. (Thrasher, 1927) These youth gangs had distinct symbols of membership and were more organized than their predecessors. Interestingly, both of these periods of growth subsided **without** major governmental intervention.

The third major increase in youth gang activity in the United States occurred during the 1960's when racial and ethnic minorities were first involved in gang activities in a major way. The gangs of the 1960's were far more violent than previous youth gangs and engaged in far more serious criminal activity. The availability of guns and automobiles increased the mobility and lethality of these gangs and increase jail and prison sentences. Gang recruitment expanded to the prison setting and the gang phenomenon increased dramatically as a result. In addition, female involvement in gangs was evolving and increased steadily in the 1960's.

The fourth period of substantially increased youth gang activity began in 1980 with seemingly rapid expansion of youth gangs in this nation's cities. The gang culture was embraced by the popular culture and was advertised through movies, television, music and other media. Walter Miller published the first **national** study of the gang problem in 1975, which was followed by an expanded study in 1982. At that time, Miller estimated that there were **97,940** gang members in gangs located in 286 **cities**. (Curry & Decker, 1998)

In the 1990's, gang activity also expanded dramatically in the nation's suburban and rural areas with 1994 cited by respondents of the "1996 National Youth Gang Survey" as the most frequently cited year for the onset of their gang problems. This was the most extensive survey ever conducted about gangs, and the results indicated that up to **4,824** U.S. cities were experiencing gang problems and that there may be **31,000** street gangs nationally with a total membership of **846,000**. This fourth period of expansion is continuing but it is difficult to determine how much of the recent increase is due to increased awareness of the problem, or different survey methodology, as opposed to a genuine increase in gang activity. In any event, the gang problem in the United States is substantial and apparently increasing significantly.

5. TYPES OF GANGS

The devil dances in an empty pocket.

15th Century Proverb

OVERVIEW

Carl Taylor (1990) groups gang characteristics into three categories - **corporate, territorial and scavenger**. **Corporate gangs** exist to make money. There is a clearly defined division of labor, and the gang activities are almost exclusively committed for profit. **Territorial gangs** focus on possession of turf and gang members will use violence to protect the property of the gang. **Scavenger gangs** have little structure and gang members are motivated by a need to belong to a group, often act impulsively, and are prone to act violently and aimlessly. These categories are only one way to classify gangs. It is impossible to describe the characteristics of all types of gangs and a standard definition does not exist.

...Juvenile Gangs,
Street Gangs,
Taggers, Drug
Gangs, Satanic
Groups, Posses,
Crews, Cliques,
and Stoners.

There is also a distinct difference between unsupervised and troublesome youth groups and gangs. These 'troublesome' adolescent groups are not gangs because they lack size, formal organization and permanence, and their delinquency is not as frequent, serious or violent as that of youth gangs. In addition, hate groups, organized crime, and anti-government groups are not included in this analysis. However, there are many other type of groups

included in the definitions of gangs used in the '1996 National Gang Survey' and they include the following: Juvenile Gangs, Street Gangs, Taggers, Drug Gangs, Satanic Groups, Posses, Crews, Cliques, and Stoners. (1996 National Youth Gang Survey, U.S. Dept. of Justice, 1998) This describes the gang types included in both the national and county research studies.

Gang

There is no accepted standard gang definition. State and local jurisdictions tend to develop their own. The following criteria have been widely used in research; 1) formal organization structure (not a syndicate), 2) identifiable leadership, 3) a common identifying sign, symbol or name, 4) identified with a territory, 5) recurrent interaction, and 6) engaging in serious or violent behavior. These criteria are increasingly used to distinguish gangs from other law-violating youth groups and other collective youth groups. Unlike adult crime, most juvenile delinquency is committed in groups. (Howell, 1994)

Juvenile Gang

Juvenile gangs are gangs comprised of juvenile members exclusively, depending upon the definition of juvenile within the jurisdiction. In New York State an individual is a juvenile until their sixteenth birthday, whereas in most jurisdictions a juvenile is anyone under eighteen.

Youth Gang

A "youth gang" is defined as a group of youths, aged approximately 10 to 24 that law enforcement agencies identify or classify as a 'gang' because of the structure, leadership, symbolism, and illegal activity. Not included are motorcycle gangs, hate or ideology groups, prison gangs, or adult gangs.

Street Gang

Definitions of street gangs usually include most or all of the following elements:

- Three or more individuals associate periodically as an ongoing criminal group or organization, whether loosely or tightly structured.
- The group or organization has identifiable leaders, although the leader for one type of criminal activity may be different than the leader for another.
- The group has a name or identifying symbol.
- The organization's members, individually or collectively, currently engage in or have engaged in violent or other criminal activity that includes

Tagger crews are small groups of 'taggers' who are associated with each other and commit or share acts of graffiti vandalism together.

homicide, assault with a deadly weapon, aggravated battery and assault, arson, intimidation of witnesses and others, robbery, forcible rape, kidnapping, vandalism (graffiti), burglary and larceny, and drug trafficking. In most instances, gang crime involves violence, drugs, weapons, or a combination thereof.

- The group frequently identifies with or claims control over specific territory (turf) in the community, wears distinctive dress and colors, and communicates through graffiti and hand signs, among other means.

Drug Gangs

May develop as subgroups of street gangs or may develop independently and are involved in the sale and distribution of illegal drugs.

Stoners

The origin of their name came from the fact that members were consistently stoned on drugs and alcohol. Some stoner gangs were formed in defense from other gangs or groups.

Posse

A small group of individuals displaying all the characteristics of the gang culture, but not affiliated with one of the major gangs. Posses often form in response to the threat of the larger national gangs.

Taggers

A tagger is a person who adopts a nickname (tag) and then writes that tag in as many places as possible. **Taggers** prefer to call themselves “writers”, “piecers”, or “artists”, but by putting graffiti on public or private property without permission, they are vandals. **Tagger crews** are small groups of ‘taggers’ who are associated with each other and commit or share acts of graffiti vandalism together.

6. GANG IDENTIFIERS

A gang problem must be recognized before it can be addressed.

Irving Spergel (1994)

In this section, the warning signs that gang activity is emerging are described. One indicator is not sufficient to confirm the presence of gangs but taken together the following indicators are helpful.

Graffiti

Gangs use graffiti to identify themselves, to advise the community and other gangs of their territory, to intimidate others, and to communicate messages. The graffiti often contains the gang's name, the member's nickname (tag), warnings to rival gangs, challenges or a declaration of loyalty to the gang.

Colors

...some of the more sophisticated gangs are choosing not to display their colors, and have substituted fashionable and popular clothing instead.

All major gangs have designated colors. However, a recent development is that some of the more sophisticated gangs are choosing not to display their colors, and have substituted inconspicuous fashionable and popular clothing instead. (NY Times, 8/15/99) This reportedly is done in order to avoid the spotlight of law enforcement.

The vast majority of gangs display their colors in numerous ways including beads, bandannas, clothing, hats, shoe laces and more.

Jewelry

Different types of jewelry including earrings, bracelets, beads, gold symbols, and chains are worn by gang members.

Hand Signs

Almost all street gangs utilize some form of hand sign(s). It's their means of greeting, identifying and communicating with each other.

Language

When an individual joins a gang there is usually a change in an individual's language to use of slang, buzz words and nicknames. Gang slang has become an influential part of the population culture and has been embraced by a large number of youth.

Tattoos

Gang members will often tattoo their head, hands, arms, chest and back with gang markings. The tattoos play a significant role in identifying specific gangs, as most members will have multiple tattoos. Generally, one of those tattoos will clearly identify their gang.

Admissions, Associations, and Attitude

Many gang members are proud of their gang membership and will not hesitate to identify with the gang and readily admit their association. However, mere association with a known gang member does not confirm an individual's membership and additional identifying factors are needed prior to making a decision regarding membership.

...many gang members "go under the radar."

Hangouts

Gang members meet on a routine basis in order to conduct business. Many of their meetings take place in public.

Increase in Crime

Gang related crime such as graffiti, other acts of vandalism, assaults, burglaries, robberies, drug crimes and even drive-by shootings are associated with increased gang activity.

A Cautionary Note:

To avoid detection by Police, many **true gang members** have given up the more obvious symbols and colors altogether and now dress in the same expensive sportswear that businessmen or college students buy. Individuals today are concentrating on blending in as opposed to standing out. Beads are hidden and many members "**go under the radar**".

5. MEASURING AND DEFINING YOUTH GANG ACTIVITY

*Nothing is so firmly believed as that
Which is least known.*

Michel De Montaigne
(1533 - 1592)

Definitions of gangs continue to present a major obstacle to measuring gang activity on a national level. "Little agreement has been reached on what constitutes a gang, gang member or gang incident, despite efforts to gain a consensus." (1996 National Youth Gang Survey, July, 1999)

As a result, there presently is no one national standard definition of gangs and each state and many localities have developed their own definitions. This situation is not expected to change very soon, although the U.S. Department of Justice is trying to develop a consensus. The lack of standard definitions requires that researchers and practitioners proceed cautiously when interpreting the results of gang surveys and needs assessments.

Without one definition, prior national research has been haphazard and the establishment of national baseline data has been elusive as a result. However, during the last decade several studies have measured the increase in gang activity, including homicides, violence, and crime in quite a number of specific geographical regions. As a result, directional patterns have been documented and are more accurate than ever before.

The youth gang problem in the United States has clearly become an important policy issue in the last ten years.

Still there are problems. For example, the **1996 National Youth Gang Survey**, published in July 1999, did not seek to define gangs narrowly. The survey defined a youth gang as “a group of youths or young adults in (the respondent’s) jurisdiction that (the respondent) or other responsible persons in (the respondent’s) agency or community are willing to identify or classify as a ‘gang.’” Survey participants were asked to exclude motorcycle gangs, hate or ideology groups, prison gangs, and exclusively adult gangs. No definition was presented regarding what constitutes a gang member or gang incident, although respondents were asked whether the gang homicides reported in the survey were solely gang motivated.

As a result of a wider, self-reporting definition of gangs by localities, types of gangs included juvenile gangs, street gangs, taggers, drug gangs, satanic groups, posses, crews, stoners and terrorist groups. Taggers were included in the definitions of 58% of the respondents, while terrorists groups were included in 5%. A distinction was made between “unsupervised peer groups who are small groups of adolescents, typically with three or four members, that are highly transitory and poorly organized”, (Warr, 1996).

The youth gang problem in the United States has clearly become an important policy issue in the last ten years because of the increasing proliferation of youth gangs throughout the nation’s cities, suburbs and rural areas. The need for national research to identify and measure the dynamics of this phenomenon has accelerated the development of a standard unit of measurement. In the meanwhile, caution in interpreting the results is warranted.

6. THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS

*It is a capital mistake to theorize
Before one has the data.*

Sherlock Holmes

In the last section, we discussed the problems currently being experienced in measuring the exact nature and prevalence of gang activity. In spite of the problems, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that gangs are a serious and growing problem throughout the nation. Better methods of measurement are clearly needed before a national assessment is completed. However, there are some jurisdictions, especially in the cities where gangs are out of control and the community impact is devastating. In this section, a brief analysis of **theoretical causes** of gang problems is presented.

Social Disorganization Theory

Frederick Thrasher's (1927) study of Chicago youth gangs used the social disorganization theory to explain why kids joined gangs. In brief, he believed that when social institutions failed to fulfill the needs of the youth, they turned to gangs to satisfy those needs. When families or schools were weak or ineffective in socializing a youngster, the gang filled the gaps. This early interpretation of social disorganization theory, applied to the explanation of gangs, was a helpful advance in understanding but did not explain why many poor urban centers with very stable patterns of residing and strong personal ties among community members still had persistent gang problems. (Curry & Decker, 1998).

Robert Bursik (1993) refined this theory to include "differential social organization" to explain this phenomenon. Basically, there are three types of community social control in urban settings: the personal level of social control, the parochial level, and the public level. **Personal social control** is based on the interpersonal ties between individual community residents and this is the basis of classical social disorganization theory. The **parochial level of social control** consists of the ties between community residents and secondary institutions such as schools and businesses. The **public level** of social control addresses the control of community residents over public resources such as government and the economy, and access to and control over law enforcement and the justice system. This explains how a community with high personal social control but low parochial and/or public social control could fall prey to persistent **gang** problems.

Social disorganization theory is again a major factor in policy and planning efforts to prevent the emergency and persistence of gang problems. (Curry & Decker, 1998).

Malcolm Klein (1995) has argued that gang proliferation has increased because gang culture has become part of the nation's popular culture supported by the media.

Subcultural and Values Perspectives

Subcultural theory focuses on the values, beliefs and meanings among subgroups that are different from the mainstream culture. Albert Cohen (1955) suggested that gang members fail to succeed in the large middle-class value system and turn to a set of negative values which when collectively shared become a subculture organized into a gang. Walter Miller (1958) disagreed and suggested that the gang subculture was not a reaction to middle class values, but reflect the lower class concerns that gang members share with their parents and other members of the lower class.

Malcolm Klein (1995) has argued that gang proliferation has increased because gang culture has become part of the nation's popular culture supported by the media. Gang symbols, language, clothing, lifestyle has been glamorized resulting in copycat rivalries and conflicts. According to Klein, overreaction by the police can cause the copycat groups to become cohesive and turn into full-fledged gangs. (Curry & Decker, 1998).

Social Learning Theory and Social Control Theory

Winfrey (1995) has argued that the basic tenets of social learning theory and social control theory are used routinely by gang researchers. **Social learning theory explains that gang involvement is more likely for youth who already have preconceptions about favorable consequences from joining a gang. Social control theory holds that gang involvement would be more likely for youngsters who are impulsive or hedonistic.** Both theories assert that changes in attitudes and values predate gang involvement. (Curry & Decker, 1998).

7. KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Empirical analysis of gangs in the United States arguably began with Frederic M. Thrasher's 1927 study, entitled, **"The Gang, A Study of 2,313 Gangs in Chicago"**. Since this initial study, helpful research and analysis has been conducted by William Whyte (1943), Albert K. Cohen (1955), Block & Niederhoffer (1958), Cloward & Ohlin (1960), Yabonsky (1962), Spergel (1964, 1966), Walter B. Miller (1982), and others.

In this section, the most significant **recent research** findings in the authors' opinion are presented for consideration.

A. Rochester Youth Development Study

What is the relationship between gang membership and delinquent behavior? Would gang members be just as violent if they were operating by themselves or in small delinquent peer groups? These and other related research questions

...the norms and group dynamics of the gang facilitated delinquent and violent behavior.

about adolescent gangs are being answered by a longitudinal study of 1,000 urban adolescents supported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The Rochester study is investigating the causes and consequences of adolescent delinquency and drug use by following a sample of high-risk urban adolescents from their early teenage years through their early adult years.

The variable measuring gang involvement demonstrates that there is a strong relationship between gang membership and delinquent behavior, particularly serious and violent delinquency. (Browning, Thornberry, Porter, 1999)

- Although they represented only one-third of the Rochester sample, gang members accounted for 86 percent of serious delinquent acts, 69 percent of violent delinquent acts, and 70 percent of drug sales.
- Gang members had higher rates of violent offenses when they were active gang members than either before they belonged to the gang or after they left the gang. **This suggests that the norms and group dynamics of the gang facilitated delinquent and violent behavior.**
- Gang membership had a strong impact on the incidence of violent behavior, even when other risk factors (such as poverty, prior involvement in violence, and association with delinquent peers) were held constant. **This indicates that the high rates of violence by gang members were not simply the result of the accumulation of risk in their backgrounds.**

The study also found that structural position, such as social class and community of residence, had important effects on delinquency. Children from underclass backgrounds (as indicated by persistent, high-level poverty) were more involved in delinquency, especially serious delinquency.

B. NIJ Comparative Study of Criminal Behavior, Youth Gangs and At-Risk Youths

This study was conducted in Denver and Aurora, Colorado; Broward County, Florida and Cleveland Ohio (Huff, 1998), and explored the differences between the criminal behavior of youth gang members and non-gang, but similarly at-risk youths. The research suggests important implications for preventing involvement in, and intervening in youth gang activity.

- The report corroborates other recent longitudinal and cross-sectional studies that suggest **gang membership increases the likelihood and frequency that members will commit serious and violent crimes.**

The data suggest that an important opportunity exists for aggressive intervention during the early years of gang involvement.

- The research shows that **gang members in each of the survey sites are much more likely to sell drugs than non-gang, at-risk youths**. Both gang members and at-risk youths reported that **gangs do not control drug trafficking in their communities**.
- Most significantly, the research found that contrary to popular belief, **youths can resist overtures to join a gang without serious reprisals from members**.
- Reprisals suffered by those youths who resisted overtures to join a gang were often milder than the serious assaults endured by youths during their gang initiation. **This finding provides an important component for gang prevention programs for at-risk youths**.
- **The study found a clear and consistent pattern regarding initial gang involvement and age at first arrest**. Across all sites, researchers found that the median age at which youths began hanging out with gangs was approximately 13 years old. The median age for joining the gang was about 14 years old. The age of first arrest mirrored the age at which youths joined their gangs (14 years old).
- Data from the Ohio study suggest that gang members' criminal careers begin with property offenses (e.g., auto theft, burglary) and progress within 1.5 to 2 years to drug-related crimes and violent crime. **The data suggest that an important opportunity exists for aggressive intervention during the early years of gang involvement**.
- While many gang members and non-gang, at-risk youths who sell drugs indicated they would not give up drug selling for less than \$15 per hour, **a significant number of them said they would accept far lower wages – not much more than is currently being paid in fast-food restaurants – if they could obtain a sufficient number of work hours per week**.
- **Gang members are much more likely than non-gang members to possess powerful and highly lethal weapons**.
- **The criminal behavior committed by gang members is extensive and significantly exceeds that committed by comparably at-risk but non-gang youths**.

C. Additional Research

Recent research by Dr. James C. Howell, in his work entitled, **Youth Gang Programs & Strategies**, (1998) summarizes much of the additional significant gang research findings during the 1990's, as follows:

...at least in emerging gang areas, most adolescents do not long remain in gangs, suggesting that members can be drawn away from gangs with attractive alternatives.

The recent dispelling of several myths about gangs provides basis for encouragement that this problem is more controllable than previously believed. **First, gangs typically are not highly organized, at least in emerging gang cities.** Decker and colleagues (1998) compared the two gangs that police in San Diego and Chicago identified. They found that the Chicago gangs were far more highly organized than the San Diego gangs, but that **“levels of organization are not necessarily linked to increased involvement in crime”** (p. 408). In their disorganized character, the San Diego gangs resembled what Sanders (1994) found in San Diego and gangs others have studied in emerging gang cities such as St. Louis (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996), Milwaukee (Hagedorn, 1988), Denver, Cleveland, and Columbus, OH (Huff, 1996, 1998), Seattle (Fleisher, 1995), Kansas City (Fleisher, 1998), Pittsburgh (Klein, 1995), and in San Francisco (Waldorf, 1993). **Second, in most instances, adolescents can refuse to join gangs without reprisal** (Decker and Kempf-Leonard, 1991, Maxson et al., 1998). **Third, gang members (especially marginal members) typically can leave the gang without serious consequences** (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Fleisher, 1995). **Fourth, at least in emerging gang areas, most adolescents do not long remain in gangs** (Battin-Pearson et al., 1999), **suggesting that members can be drawn away from gangs with attractive alternatives.** **Fifth, the seemingly intractable gang-drug-violence connection is not particularly strong among youth gangs and seems to apply primarily to adult criminal gangs** (Howell & Decker, 1999). **Sixth, some jurisdictions may be adopting a view of well-publicized Los Angeles gang problems to their own jurisdiction which may not apply** (Miethe & McCorkle, 1997a).

D. Research-Based Policy Implications

These longitudinal cohort studies provide valuable information regarding the relationship between criminal behavior and gang membership. They also have significant policy implications in Suffolk County's efforts to prevent youth gang proliferation and reduce youth crime.

Education and prevention. Youths who join gangs tend to begin as “wannabes” at about age 13, join about 6 months later, and get arrested within 6 months after joining the gang. By age 14 they already have an arrest record. **This underscores the urgent need for effective gang-resistance education programs and other primary and secondary prevention and intervention initiatives directed at pre-teens, especially those prone to delinquent and violent behavior.**

Resisting overtures. Young people can refuse to join gangs without substantial risk of physical harm. Moreover, they are far better off to resist joining gangs than to expose themselves to the beating they are likely to take upon initiation and the increased chances of arrest, incarceration, injury, and death associated with gang membership.

Windows of opportunity for intervening. Because prevention programs will not deter all youths from joining gangs, it is also important to address **the brief window of opportunity for intervention that occurs in the year between the “wannabe” stage and the age at first arrest.** It is vital that intervention programs that target gang members and successfully divert them from the gang are funded, developed, evaluated, improved, and sustained.

A second opportunity to intervene occurs between the time gang members are first arrested for property crimes and their subsequent involvement in more serious offenses. This period, which lasts about 1.5 to 2 years, affords a chance to divert young offenders from the gang subculture before they further endanger their own lives and victimize other citizens. (NCJ, Huff, 1998)

V. SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

*It is almost as important to know what
is not serious as to know what is.*

John Kenneth Galbraith

In this section, an assessment of the nature and scope of the national, regional and local gang problem is made based on the most current available information. Included in the analysis of gang activity in Suffolk County is a profile of confirmed gang members, as well as selected case histories. As previously explained, there is no standard national definition of a gang or of what constitutes a gang member. Although consensus is building, it is still not possible to make direct comparisons of gang statistics between jurisdictions. Therefore, the assessment of gang activity has to be analyzed separately, based on the definitions of each particular area.

1. NATIONAL STATISTICS

*Facts do not cease to exist
because they are ignored.*

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963)

The 1996 National Youth Gang Survey estimated that 30,818 gangs and 846,428 gang members were active in the United States in 1996.

This section of the report is based on the findings published in July 1999 in the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's **1996 National Youth Gang Survey**, conducted by the National Youth Gang Center. Some material is excerpted directly from this report.

Prior to the 1995 National Youth Gang Survey, the national estimates of gangs ranged from 8,600 to 9,000 with 375,000 to 400,000 gang members (Curry, Ball, and Decker, 1996; Klein, 1995). However, the samples used in previous surveys were limited in size and scope.

The sample of jurisdictions reporting gangs in the 1995 National Youth Gang Survey included counties and was much larger (2,007) than any used in previous studies of gang activity. Results of the survey indicated that approximately 23,000 gangs and 665,000 gang members were active in the United States in 1995 (Moore, 1997; National Youth Gang Center, 1997). These figures were based on actual reports or estimates by city and county law enforcement agencies. The data were not extrapolated to account for agencies not included in the survey, because the sample was not representative.

However, the 1996 National Youth Gang Survey was designed to be representative of the Nation as a whole. Therefore, inferences could be made about gang problems in cities and counties not included in the survey. After

extrapolations were conducted for the random samples and non-respondents for large cities and suburban counties, it was estimated that 30,818 gangs and 846,428 gang members were active in the United States in 1996 (see table 9).

TABLE 1: ESTIMATED 1996 GANG MEMBERSHIP TOTALS BY REGION

Area Type	<u>Reported Number</u>		<u>Extrapolated Number</u>	
	Gangs	Gang Members	Gangs	Gang Members
Large city	11,495	469,267	12,481	513,243
Small city	315	3,618	8,053	92,448
Suburban county	6,897	195,205	7,956	222,267
Rural county	<u>533</u>	<u>5,000</u>	<u>1,968</u>	<u>18,470</u>
Total	19,240	673,090	30,818	846,428

Fifty-three percent of respondents in the United States had active gangs in 1996. More specifically, gang activity was reported in 74 percent of large cities, 57 percent of suburban counties, 34 percent of small cities, and 25 percent of rural counties.

When the number of gang members reported in each jurisdiction was accounted for, the number of gang members nationwide was evenly split between juveniles and adults. The vast majority of gang members (71 percent) were reported to be from 15 to 24 years old. Adult gang members were most prevalent in suburban counties (58 percent) and large cities (51 percent).

Males were reported to be substantially more involved in gang activity than their female counterparts. When the number of gang members reported in each jurisdiction was controlled for, females constituted only 10 percent of gang members throughout the country.

Survey results also revealed that the racial/ethnic composition of gangs has changed compared with earlier national surveys and research involving smaller samples. Caucasians accounted for 14 percent of all gang members nationwide. In addition, the proportion of Caucasian gang members was more than twice the national average in rural counties (32 percent) and small cities (31 percent). However, Hispanic and African-American gang members continued to constitute the majority of gang members, especially in large cities and suburban counties.

Eighty-four percent (84%) of the respondents indicated that they had experienced some migration of gang members into their jurisdictions. It was estimated that 21 percent of all gang members in jurisdictions that experienced some migration had migrated to the jurisdiction in which they were residing.

...a substantial number of respondents (47 percent) indicated that gang members controlled or managed less than one-quarter of all drug distribution in their jurisdiction.

Youth gang members were estimated to have been involved in 2,364 homicides in large cities and 561 homicides in suburban counties. Regarding other crimes, respondents indicated that youth gang members were more involved in larceny/theft, followed fairly closely by aggravated assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft. **Youth gang members were not extensively involved in robbery** – almost half of the respondents reported low degrees of involvement.

On average, respondents estimated that 43 percent of the drug sales in their jurisdictions involved gang members. However, **a substantial number of respondents (47 percent) indicated that gang members controlled or managed less than one-quarter of all drug distribution in their jurisdictions.**

The results of this survey indicate that the youth gang problem in this country is substantial and affects communities of all sizes. Almost three-fourths of the cities surveyed with populations greater than 25,000 reported youth gangs in 1996. Furthermore, a majority of suburban counties had gangs, as did a significant percentage of small cities and rural counties. Caucasians were found to be more involved in gang activity than previous studies and surveys had indicated, and their predominance in rural counties and small cities was especially high. Gang members were involved in a significant amount of crime, but the degree of involvement and type of crime varied by area type, region, and population.

2. REGIONAL STATISTICS

The findings of the **1996 National Youth Gang Survey** clearly document that gang activity in the United States varies substantially by region and the differences in gang activity by region were found to be statistically significant. Both population size and area type had a statistically significant relationship to the level of gang activity reported for each region.

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF JURISDICTIONS REPORTING GANGS IN 1996, BY REGION

<u>Region</u>	<u>Percentage Reporting Gangs</u>
West	75%
Midwest	54%
South	50%
Northeast	35%

Table 2 presents the percentages of survey respondents reporting gangs in 1996 for each region of the country. Respondents in the West, which has historically experienced significant gang problems, reported the highest level of gang activity (75 percent). This is more than 20 percent higher than the next highest region, the Midwest, which reported 54 percent. In addition, 50 percent of the survey respondents in the South reported gangs in 1996, followed by 35 percent for the Northeast.

Agencies that reported gangs in their jurisdictions prior to 1996 were asked to identify the year in which gangs first posed a problem. **Most respondents indicated that their gang problem began quite recently; 1994 was the most frequently cited year.** The year of onset varied somewhat by area type. **On average**, gangs began to pose a problem in 1989 for large cities, 1990 for suburban counties, 1992 for small cities, and 1993 for rural counties (see table 7). Regionally, the average year of onset was 1986 in the West, 1990 in the Midwest, and 1991 in both the Northeast and South (see table 8).

3. SUFFOLK COUNTY PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

At the individual level of analysis, the causes of gang membership appear little different from the causes of delinquency in general.

(Thornberry, forthcoming)

In this section, an assessment of gang activity is made, as of September 17, 1999 based on the existing Probation Department's gang data base which received input from the Police Department, the Sheriff's Office, Probation's Pretrial Services (ROR), the District Attorney's Office, Probation Supervision, Court Officers, Parole and other agencies. Beyond the statistical compilation of identified or suspected gang members, this report describes gang diversity and conflict as it applies to Suffolk County. Also, the risk factors for gang members are presented for consideration.

The last section of this report presents an in-depth profile of a representative sample of youth gang members including an analysis of group characteristics, an individual unit analysis of relevant factors and case histories of typical youth gang members sentenced to probation.

A. Identification & Statistical Measurement

The types of gang and gang members recorded in the Suffolk County Gang database include the following: 1) street gangs, 2) drug gangs (type of street gang), 3) youth gangs, 4) posses or cliques, 5) tagger crews, 6) hate groups, 7) satanic groups, and 8) motorcycle gangs.

**TABLE 3: SUFFOLK COUNTY RESIDENTS IDENTIFIED
AS CONFIRMED OR SUSPECTED GANG MEMBERS
BY CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCIES**

		<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>Status of Case</u>	Confirmed	781	81.7%
	Suspected/Pending	175	18.3%
	Total	956	100.0%

As illustrated in Table 3, as of September 17, 1999, there were **781** individuals in the Interagency/Probation gang file who were **confirmed gang** members either by self-admission, or verified gang activity. In addition, each was a **Suffolk County resident** with an identified local residence. In addition, there were **175** Suffolk County residents identified as **suspected gang** members still requiring confirmation as to their status. Therefore, a total of **956 Suffolk County residents** have been identified as gang members or suspected gang members by criminal justice agencies as of 9/17/99.

**TABLE 4: TOTAL NUMBER OF CONFIRMED OR SUSPECTED
MEMBERS IDENTIFIED BY CRIMINAL JUSTICE
AGENCIES AS OPERATING IN SUFFOLK COUNTY
BUT NOT VERIFIED COUNTY RESIDENTS**

<u>Residency</u>		<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
	Suffolk County	956	68.2%
	Out-of-County	210	15.0%
	Address Unknown	235	16.8%
	Total	1,401	100.0%

As illustrated in Table 4, a total of **1,401** individuals have been identified as confirmed or suspected gang members who have been active in Suffolk County. This total represents approximately one-tenth of one percent of the resident population of Suffolk County. Out of this total, **956**, or **68.2%** are confirmed Suffolk County residents, while **210** or **15%** have 'out-of-County' residences and **235** or **16.8%** have no known address at this time (Sept. 17, 1999). All of these individuals comprise the County gang database.

Probation Involvement

Out of the total number of resident gang members (956), 529 individual or 55.3% had some current or prior probation involvement during their lives, including Probation Family Court Intake, Probation Juvenile Supervision or Criminal Court Supervision. As of September 17, 1999 there were 193 or 20.2% active gang members who were residents of Suffolk County and currently receiving probation supervision services.

TABLE 5: CHARACTERISTICS OF JUVENILE & ADULT GANG MEMBERS SENTENCED TO PROBATION SUPERVISION ON 9/17/99

		<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<u>Characteristics of Gang Members</u>	Gender	193	<u>100.0%</u>
	Male	191	99.0%
	Female	2	1.0%
	Age	193	<u>100.0%</u>
	16 yrs. old & over	187	96.9%
	Under 16 yrs. old	6	3.1%
	Court	193	<u>100.0%</u>
	Criminal Court	70	88.1%
	Family Court	23	11.9%

As illustrated in Table 5, 99% of the gang members on probation are male, 96.9% are adults (over 16 years), and 88.1% are sentenced to probation by the Criminal Courts. An additional **336** individuals, or 63.5% of the **529** probation related cases had prior records of probation supervision involvement during their lives.

B. Gang Diversity & Conflict

In this section, the number of major gangs is reported, as well as the different types of minor gangs active in Suffolk County. Major gangs are identified according to their membership census, as well as their organizational structure and national or regional prominence. For the minor gangs, posses, cliques, or crews, there must be three or more gang members identified in the gang database in order to be identified as a separate gang.

Of the 8 major gangs, 4 have confirmed membership totals of 100 or more in the gang database.

TABLE 6: NUMBER & TYPE OF MAJOR AND MINOR GANGS ACTIVE IN SUFFOLK COUNTY

<u>Type of Gang</u>	<u>Number</u>
Major Street Gangs	8
Posses, Cliques or Crews	18
Tagger Crews	1
Skinhead Gangs	1
White Supremacist	1
Satanic	1
Motorcycle Gangs	<u>1</u>
Total	31

As illustrated in Table 6, there are **8** major gangs and 23 minor gangs, posses, crews, or cliques currently active in Suffolk County. Of the eight (8) major gangs 4 have confirmed membership totals of **100** or more in the gang database. Of the 18 minor gangs, posses and crews have memberships ranging from 3 to 31 members. The remaining miscellaneous gangs had small verified membership levels in the database. (A minor gang, crew, etc. had to have 3 confirmed members in order to be included in this analysis.)

TABLE 7: RESIDENT MEMBERSHIP SIZE OF THE EIGHT MAJOR GANGS ACTIVE IN SUFFOLK COUNTY BASED ON THE 1999 RESEARCH DATA FILE

<u>Gang</u>	<u>Membership Size</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
1	233	28.8%
2	176	21.8%
3	120	14.9%
4	115	14.2%
5	89	11.0%
6	34	4.2%
7	31	3.9%
8	<u>10</u>	<u>1.2%</u>
Total of Major Gangs	808	100.0%

As illustrated in Table 7, the identified membership at this time (9/17/99) of the major gangs in Suffolk County range from 233 individuals in the most populous gang to 10 gang members. There are four major gangs with a

confirmed resident population of 100 or more verified or suspected gang members. The combined membership of the eight major gangs is 808 resident gang members, which represents 84.5% of the County total.

These same eight major gangs comprise 99.5% or 209 out of the 210 ‘Out-of-County’ gang members included in the Probation data file as active in Suffolk County. In addition, only 36 female resident gang members or (3.8%) have been identified as of 9/17/99 and they are all affiliated with the eight major gangs.

There is a moderate amount of diversity among Suffolk County gangs although most gangs are street gangs comprised of male, minority members between the ages of 16 and 24 years old. No female gangs were identified in the database. Rivalry exists between some of the eight major gangs. However, the existing gang database does not contain evidence of Asian gangs, Native American gangs, Russian gangs or Stoners.

C. Risk Factors for Gang Membership

Researchers categorize risk factors for youth gang membership into five major categories: community, peers, individual, family and school. Thornberry (1988) found predictors of gang membership in all five domains. **Among community variables growing up in a neighborhood in which the level of social attachment is low was found to be most important. Among family variables poverty, absence of biological parents, low parental attachment to the child, and low parental supervision increase the probability of gang membership. Within the school variable low expectation for success, low student commitment to school, and low attachment to teachers were three significant risk factors. Thornberry found within the peer category, associating with gang members and unsupervised time with delinquent friends the most important. He found the most important individual risk factors include numerous negative life events, depressive symptoms, and easy access to drugs or favorable views towards drug use.**

Thornberry 1988 also found youth that use drugs and are involved with delinquency are more likely to become gang members.

Researchers have found a variety of risk factors in addition to the ones listed above:

Risk factors within the community domain include social disorganization, (Curry & Spergel, 1988), Presence of gangs in the neighborhood, (Curry & Spergel, 1992), Availability of drugs in the neighborhood, (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1992; Taylor, 1989, Curry & Spergel, 1992), (Hagerdorn, 1988), (Kosterman et al. 1996); (Moore, 1978, 1991).

Risk factors within the family domain include: family disorganization, broken homes, parental drug/alcohol abuse (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993), (Ebsen, Huizinga, & Weiher, 1993) (Virgil, 1988), Troubled families including incest, family violence, and drug addiction, (Moore, 1978, 1991; Virgil, 1998), Lack of adult male role models, Miller, 1958, Virgil, 1998, Lack of parental role models, (Wang, 1995),

Risk factors within the school domain include: Academic failure, (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Curry & Spergel, 1992; Kosterman et al., 1996, Low educational aspirations, (Bjerregaard & Smith, Kosterman et al., 1996),

Within the peer group risk factors include: street socialization (Vigil, 1988), high commitment to delinquent peers, (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993), Ebsen & Huizinga, 1993; Virgil & Yun, 1990) and interaction with delinquent peers, Hill et al, in pres; Kosterman et al., 1996).

Individual risk factors include prior delinquency (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Curry & Spergel, 1992, Ebsensen & Huizinga, 1993; Kosterman et al, 1996), Alcohol and drug use, (Bjerregaard & Smith 1993; Curry & Spergel, 1992, Esbensen, Huizinga, & Weiher, 1993) Problem behaviors, externalizing behaviors, hyperactivity, drinking, lack of refusal skills and early sexual activity, Hill et al. In press; Kosterman et al., 1996 and finally victimization (Fagan, 1990).

The tables on the following pages are a compilation of risk factors found within the 50 cases in our sample. We have included age (*at time of Probation investigation report*), race (*H = Hispanic, W = Caucasian, B = African American and O= Other*), and gang affiliation as part of the demographic information. *Actual gang names have been replaced with the letters A through M.* The type of current offense refers to the nature of the crime the subject was arrested for (see page for detailed list), number of priors refers to number of prior charges, data collected on prior offenses was limited to the most current 5 prior offenses, however the individual may have more arrests. The amount of school information obtained from each case varied, older subjects having less school information in the case records. School information included school drop out, special education, out of district placement, leaning disability or handicapping condition, early problems in school, reading level, academic failure, expulsion and truancy. Mental health,

substance abuse & out of home placement refers to an individuals mental health issues including diagnosis, substance abuse problems which can be either a diagnosed problem or admitted drug and/or alcohol use. Out of home placements refers to an individual either voluntarily or non-voluntarily placed outside the familial home, such as placements for drug /alcohol treatment, Department of Social Services placements, Division for Youth placements, or Psychiatric inpatient placements.

D. Profile of Gang Members

a. Individual Unit Analysis

On the following table, selected risk factors of 50 gang members who had previously or are currently sentenced to probation supervision, and who are residents of Suffolk County are presented for analysis. Characteristics include the gang identifier, race, age, number of prior criminal offenses, school record, mental health history, substance abuse experience, out-of-home placement, family dynamics and other relevant information. It should be noted that this analysis does not represent a random sample of all resident gang members but only those with a probation history with accompanying case records available. Some gang members do not have criminal records.

#	GANG	RACE	AGE	TYPE OF CURRENT OFFENSE	# OF PRIORS	SCHOOL	MENTAL HEALTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS	FAMILY	OTHER
1	A	B	31	Violent	0		Uses alcohol, marijuana & stimulants	2 brothers in jail,	No
2	A	B	19	Drug	5	Failing subjects & other school problems, Drop out 6.1 Reading Level	Drug/Alcohol diagnosis, uses marijuana, alcohol & Stimulants Out of home placement		Was a victim of a stabbing
3	A	B	28	Drug	5		Uses marijuana & alcohol Brother in jail		Was a victim of a shooting
4	A	W	18	Public Disorder	4	Drop out	2 out of home placements	CPS involved w/family, brother in jail	
5	A	B		Drug	5	Drop out, special education, mentally retarded	Uses marijuana Out of home placement	Serious illness of family member, sister is substance abuser	Frequent moves
6	A	B	23	Public Disorder	5			Both parents deceased	
7	A	B	28	Public Disorder	5		Conduct Disorder, Uses alcohol & marijuana Out of home placement	Physically abused, CPS involved w/ family	
8	A	B	23	Drug	3	Drop out			
9	A	H	23	Violent	4		Uses alcohol, marijuana & stimulants	No contact with father, death of a family member	

#	GANG	RACE	AGE	TYPE OF CURRENT OFFENSE	# OF PRIORS	SCHOOL	MENTAL HEALTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS	FAMILY	OTHER
10	A	B	23	Drug	5	Drop out, out of district placement	Drug/Alcohol diagnosis, uses alcohol, marijuana & stimulants, out of home placement	Serious family problem, brother in jail	
11	A	B	21	Drug	5	Drop out-got GED	Uses alcohol, marijuana & stimulants, out of home placement		Was a victim of a stabbing
12	A	B	18	Violent	4	Drop out, special education, multiple handicap	Adjustment Disorder, Out of home placement	Foster child, serious family problem	
13	A	B	21	Drug	5		Uses alcohol		
14	B	B	20	Violent	4	Drop out	Uses marijuana & alcohol	Death of a family member, mother deceased	
15	B	H	18	Violent	5		Depression, uses marijuana & alcohol		Was a victim of a stabbing

#	GANG	RACE	AGE	TYPE OF CURRENT OFFENSE	# OF PRIORS	SCHOOL	MENTAL HEALTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS	FAMILY	OTHER
16	C	W	23	Violent	5	Drop out, special education, emotionally disturbed	ADD/ADHD, Firesetting, uses stimulants & alcohol, 5 out of home placement	Raised by grandparent, physical abuse, death of family member, family member serious illness, CPS involved w/ family, mother deceased, father in prison, sister in foster care	
17	C	H	26	Drug	5	Drop out			
18	C	H	21	Violent	4	Drop out	Drug/Alcohol, uses marijuana, alcohol & stimulants		
19	C	H	21	Violent	4	Drop out	Uses stimulants & alcohol	Death of a family member	
20	C	H	18	Violent	1	Drop out, emotionally disturbed, special education, Early problems in school	Depression, uses marijuana		
21	C	H	16	Violent	0	Drop out, 2.6 grade reading level	Uses marijuana & alcohol	Death of a family member	
22	D	W	19	Public Disorder	4	ADD/ADHD	Conduct Disorder, ADD/ADHD, uses alcohol & marijuana, out of home placement	Serious family problem, brother deceased	

#	GANG	RACE	AGE	TYPE OF CURRENT OFFENSE	# OF PRIORS	SCHOOL	MENTAL HEALTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS	FAMILY	OTHER
23	E	H	18	Property	0	Drop out, Boces	Depression, Drug/Alcohol, uses alcohol, marijuana & stimulants	Father in prison	
24	F	B	18	Violent	2	Evening High School		Foster child, serious family problem, CPS involved w/family	Was the victim of a stabbing
25	G	B	17	Drug	0	Alternative High school, failing subjects, special education	Emotionally disturbed, uses marijuana & stimulants		
26	G	B	16	Public Disorder	4	Out of district placement, multiple handicapping, failing subjects, special education, 4.2 grade reading level	Drug/Alcohol, Conduct disorder, depression, uses marijuana & alcohol, 3 out of home placements	Physical abuse, serious family problem, death of family member, family member seriously ill, CPS involved w/ family, father in hospital, sister deceased	Mother killed infant daughter
27	G	B	24	Violent	5	Drop out, special education, multiple handicapping	Uses stimulants, 2 out of home placements	Father in jail	
28	G	B	15	Public Disorder	0	Failing subjects			
29	G	B	15	Property	0	Alternative High School, special education, failing subjects	2 out of home placements	No contact with father	

#	GANG	RACE	AGE	TYPE OF CURRENT OFFENSE	# OF PRIORS	SCHOOL	MENTAL HEALTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS	FAMILY	OTHER
30	G	B	17	Drug	0	Special education, failing subjects	Uses marijuana		Multiple family members incarcerated, sexually abused
31	H	B	15	Public Disorder	0	Alternative Home HS	Uses alcohol marijuana & stimulants	Death of family member, serious family problem, father deceased, half brother & half sister both substance abusers	
32	I	H	16	Violent	0	Out of district placement	Uses marijuana & alcohol		
33	I	H	18	Violent	1	Dropout, 3.7 grade reading level	Uses marijuana & alcohol	No contact with father, serious family problem	

#	GANG	RACE	AGE	TYPE OF CURRENT OFFENSE	# OF PRIORS	SCHOOL	MENTAL HEALTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS	FAMILY	OTHER
34	J	W	21	Property	5	Drop out, Out of district placement, emotionally disturbed, special education, failing subjects	Uses marijuana & alcohol, out of home placement	Multiple family members substance abusers, brother in prison	
35	J	W	18	Drug	4	Drop out, failing subjects, expelled	Depression, ODD, Depression, Adjustment Disorder, 5 out of home placements	Tells people father is dead & stopped using his name in 3 rd grade, seriously ill family member, CPS involved w/family	
36	J	H	19	Violent	3	Drop out, failing subjects	Uses alcohol		
37	J	W	16	Public Disorder	0	Special education, emotionally disturbed	Depression, firesetting,	No contact with father	
38	J	H	19	Violent	0	Drop out, Learning disabled, failing subjects	Uses alcohol & marijuana		

#	GANG	RACE	AGE	TYPE OF CURRENT OFFENSE	# OF PRIORS	SCHOOL	MENTAL HEALTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS	FAMILY	OTHER
39	J	H	16	Property	1	Not enrolled	Depression	Foster child, serious family problem, family member seriously ill, CPS involved w/family, brother in jail, brother & sister in foster care, mother substance abuser	
40	J	H	20	Violent	3	Drop out, out of district placement, special education, emotionally disturbed	Conduct Disorder, Drug/Alcohol diagnosis uses alcohol & marijuana, out of home placement	Serious family problem	Was the victim of a beating
41	K	H	21	Violent	4	Drop out, expelled			
42	K	W	19	Violent	0		Uses alcohol & marijuana	Raised by grand-parent	
43	K	H	17	Violent	2		Uses alcohol, marijuana & stimulants	Death of a family member, father deceased	Criminal record in another country
44	K	H	17	Violent	3	Drop out , 3.0 grade reading level	Uses marijuana		
45	K	H	14	Violent	1	Drop out	Out of home placement		
46	K	H	18	Property	2	Drop out, other school problems, 3.5 grade reading level	Uses alcohol & marijuana		Was the victim of a stabbing

#	GANG	RACE	AGE	TYPE CURRENT OFFENSE	# OF PRIORS	SCHOOL	MENTAL HEALTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS	FAMILY	OTHER
47	K	O	20	Violent	0	Drop out		Raised by grand- parent	
48	L	B	16	Violent	1	Drop out	ADD/ADHD	No contact with father, mother in jail	
49	M	W	19	Violent	4	Drop out, learning disabled, special education, Early problems in school	Adolescent Anti-social Behavior, ODD, Uses alcohol & marijuana, out of home placement	Serious family problem, CPS involved w/family, father in prison, half brother in rehab	
50		W		Violent					

b. Group Characteristics

Sample:

A sample was chosen in order to represent a variety of gangs. 13 different gangs are represented within the sample. The subjects were chosen from a group of 277 identified gang members who were currently or previously sentenced to probation. All of these individuals had official probation supervision records from which the data in this section were collected. In order to be **identified** as a gang member, the following criteria were used.

1. Admits to criminal street gang membership.
2. Is identified as a gang member by a parent/guardian.
3. Is identified as a gang member by a documented reliable informant.
4. Resides/frequents a gang area, adopts a style of dress, hand signs or tattoos.
5. Is identified as a gang member by an informant of previously untested reliability and such identification is corroborated by independent information.
6. Is identified as a criminal street gang member by physical evidence such as photographs or other documentation.
7. Was stopped in the company of known criminal street gang members four or more times.

All of the 50 identified gang members selected for our sample met criteria 1,2, or 3 and at least one of the additional 4 criteria for verification. (Refer to Appendix B.)

The subject's ages ranged from 13 to 31. The mean age is 19. The racial/ ethnic background of the subjects are as follows: 44%(22) black/ African American, 38% (19) Hispanic, 16%(8) white, 2%(1) other.

Method:

A data collection instrument was developed to collect information from individual case records. The instrument was pre-tested and the data was collected from Suffolk County Probation case records.

For the purpose of our report we have omitted actual gang names and replaced them with the letters A-M. We created a general profile of gang members and gang activity.

Results:

Criminality and Gang Members

Data for the criminal activity of gang member was obtained from investigation reports within the probation case files.

The information in this section is based on the current charge. Based on the nature of the offense the initial charges were designated into 1 of 4 categories. Listed below are all the charges and the categories within which they were placed.

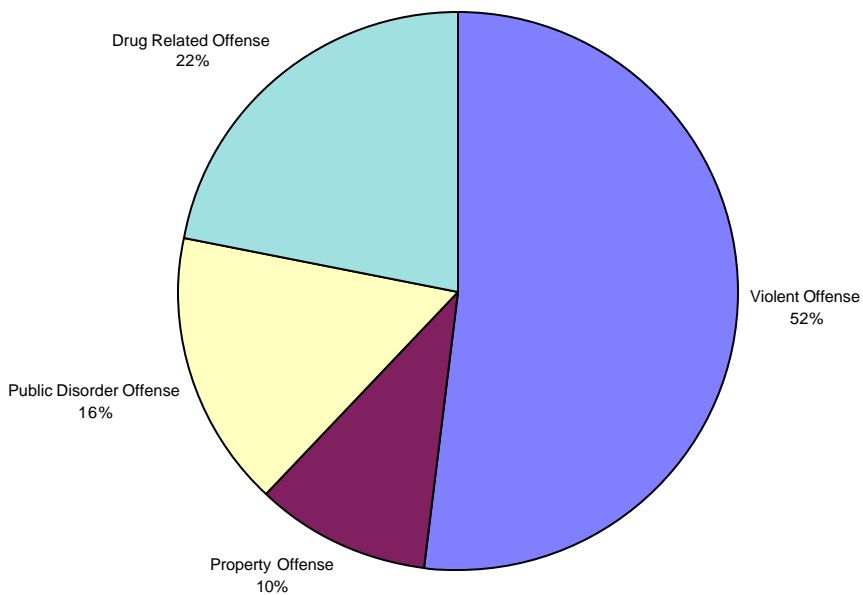
Violent Offenses	Property Offenses	Public Disorder Offenses	Drug Offenses
Robbery 1,2,3	Petit Larceny	Criminal Mischief	Criminal Possession Controlled Substance
Sodomy	Grand Larceny	Criminal Contempt	Attempt Criminal Sale of Controlled Substance
Assault 1,2,3	Criminal Possession of Stolen Property	Criminal Trespass	Criminal Sale of Controlled Substance
Criminal Possession of a weapon	Burglary 3	PINS	Criminal Possession Marijuana
Burglary 1,2	Forgery	Motor Vehicle	
Resisting Arrest		Unlawful Assembly	
Gang Assault 1,2		Possession of a Graffiti Instrument	
Reckless Endangerment		Disorderly Conduct	
Menacing		Harassment	
Animal Torture			

Types of Crimes Committed by Gang Members

44% (22) of the sample was below the age of 18 at the time of the current offense.

52 % (26) were violent offenses, 22% (11) were drug offenses, 10% (5) were property offenses and 16% (8) were public disorder offenses. ** If multiple current charges were present the most serious current charge was used.* The order of seriousness is as follows: violent offenses most serious, than drug, property and finally public disorder was least serious.

Type of Crime Committed by Gang Members

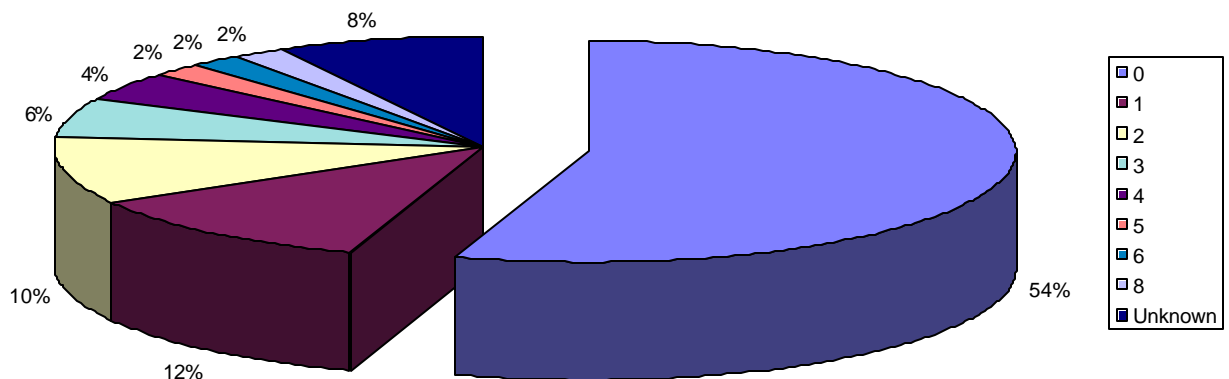


Codefendants

Although 54%(27) of all gang crime was committed alone, 61% (16) of the violent offenses were committed with one or more codefendants.

For the purpose of this study a codefendant is anyone arrested with the subject for the current offense. 54% had no codefendants at current offense, 12% had 1 codefendant, 10% had 2 codefendants, 6% had 3 codefendants, 4% had 4 codefendants, 2% had 5 codefendants, 2% had 6, 2% had 8, and 8% the number of codefendants was unknown.

All of the Drug and Property offenses were committed alone. (*4 drug and property offense cases had an unknown number of codefendants.*) 40%(2) of the public disorder offenses were committed with one or more codefendants.



Weapon Use and Current Offense:

For the purposes of our study, any weapon use in the current offense indicates the nature of the offense is violent. Of the violent offenders (n=26), 38.5% (10) used a firearm, 26.9% (7) used a knife/razor or cutting instrument, 3.8% (1) used another weapon and 30.8% (8) used no weapon or weapon use was unknown.

Drugs & Alcohol

This refers to whether drug or alcohol use had an impact on/ or was used by the subject while committing the current offense, as indicated in the investigation report. If it was not noted in the record it was recorded as no.

**This does leave room for error, if the person was not arrested immediately after the crime was committed, drug or alcohol use may not be noted in the record.*

70%(35) no-drug or alcohol use, 12%(6) yes-drugs or alcohol used, 18%(9) drug/alcohol use unknown.

15% of violent offenders had drug or alcohol use present, 18% of drug offenders had drug or alcohol use present at time of offense and none of the property offenders or public disorder offenders had drug or alcohol use present at time of current offense.

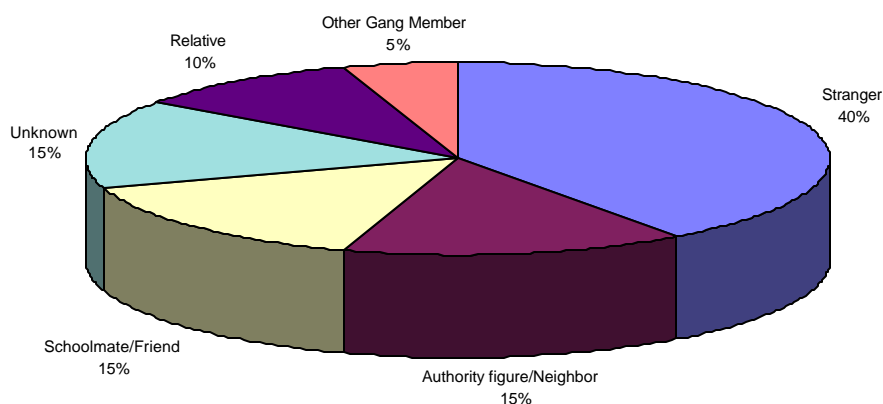
Victims of Gang related Crime:

36%(18) of the crimes committed by gang members involved a victim.

Who were the victims?

10% relatives, 15% authority figures or neighbors, 15% schoolmates or friends, 40% strangers, 15 % unknown, and 5% other gang members.

The Victims of Gang Related Crimes



Of the 18 crimes committed involving a victim, 35% (7) of the victims sustained an injury. Of the victims injured 43% of the injuries were minor (cuts, scratches, bruises) 43% were moderate (broken bones, stab) and 14% were serious injuries. (life-threatening, gunshot).

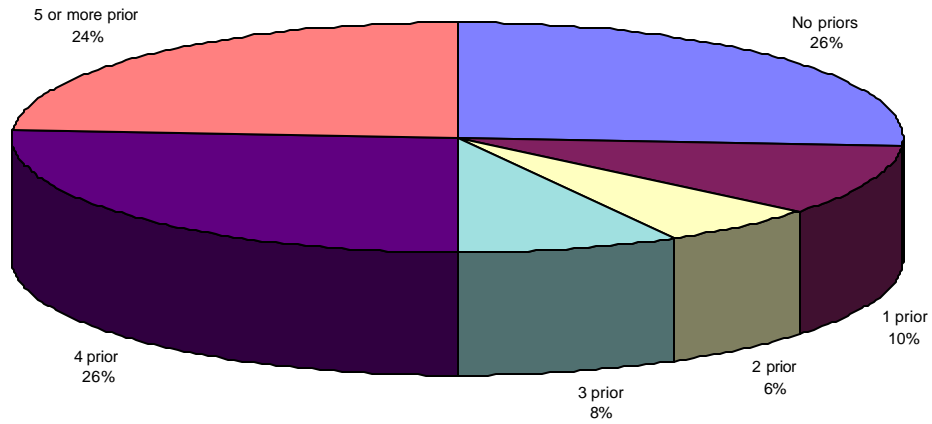
Criminal History of Gang Members:

74% (35) of the identified gang members had at least one prior offense.

58%(29) had 3 or more prior offenses. 10% (5) had 1 prior offense, 6%(3) had 3 prior offenses, 8% (4) had 3 prior offenses, 26%(13) had 4 prior offenses, and 24% (12) had five or more prior offenses.

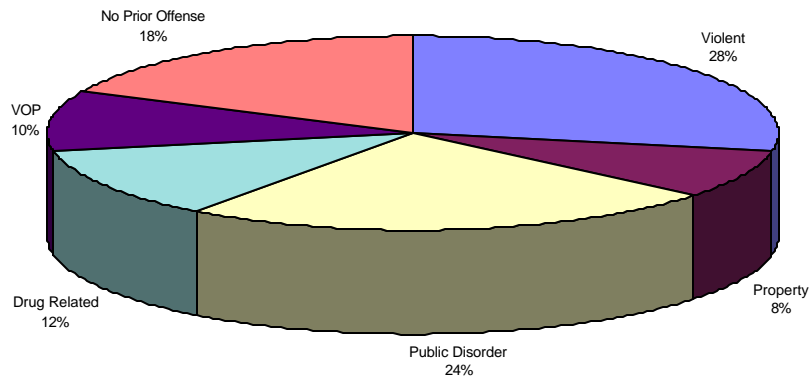
The age at prior offense ranged from 12 to 24 years of age. 59% (25) of those with a prior offense were 18 or younger at the time of first prior arrest. The average number of prior offenses is 2.7.

Gang Members & Prior Offenses

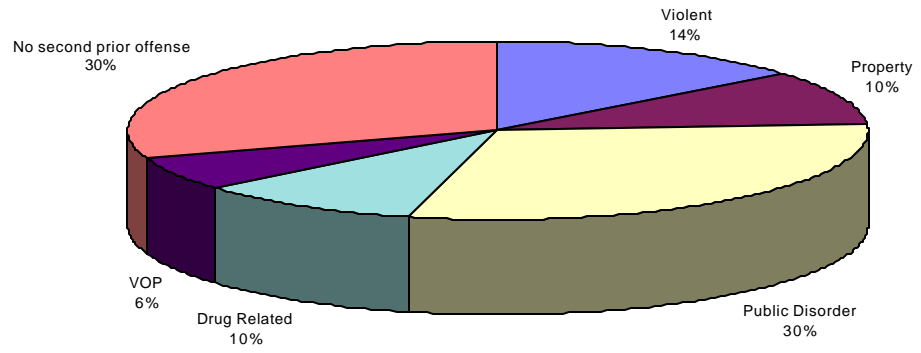


The prior offenses were categorized into the same 4 categories as the current offenses: Violent, Drug related, Property and Public Disorder offenses. (See page 51 for detailed list.)

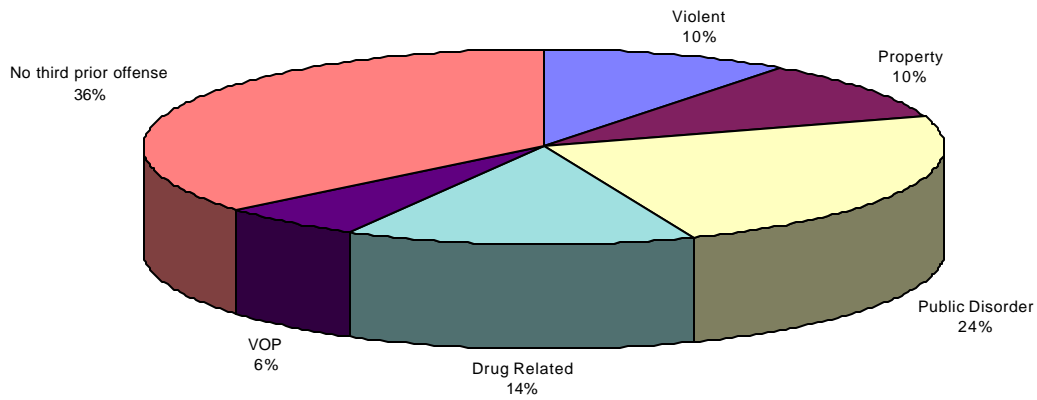
Prior Offense 1 & Type of Crime



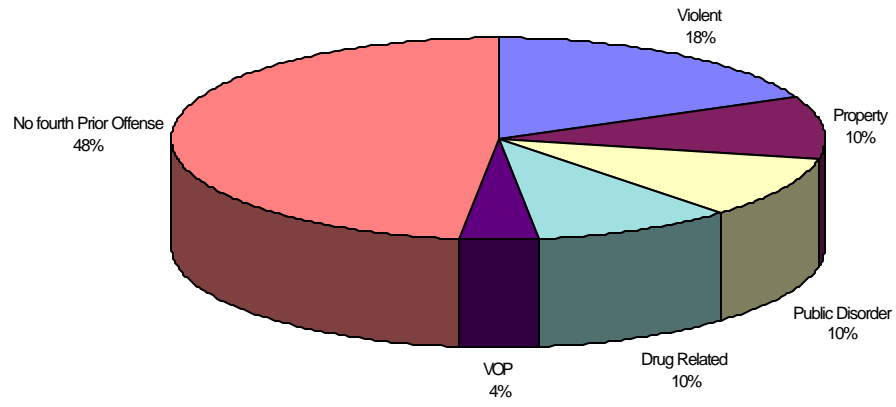
Prior Offense 2 & Type of Crime



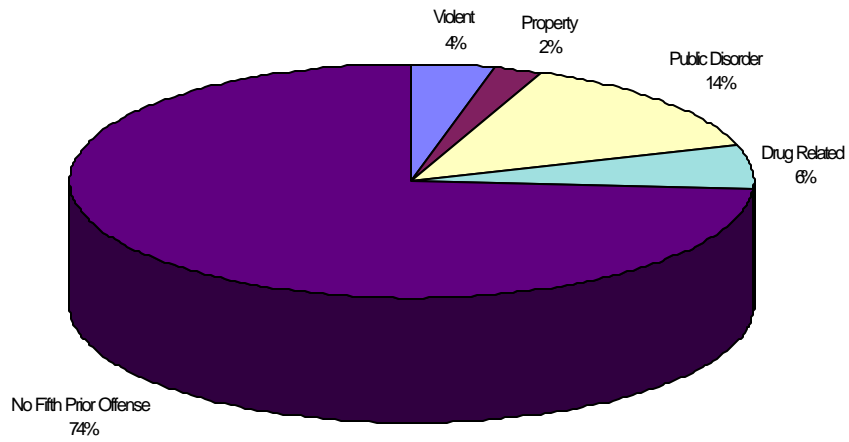
Prior Offense 3 & Type of Crime



Prior Offense 4 & Type of Crime



Prior Offense 5 & Type of Crime



School Information

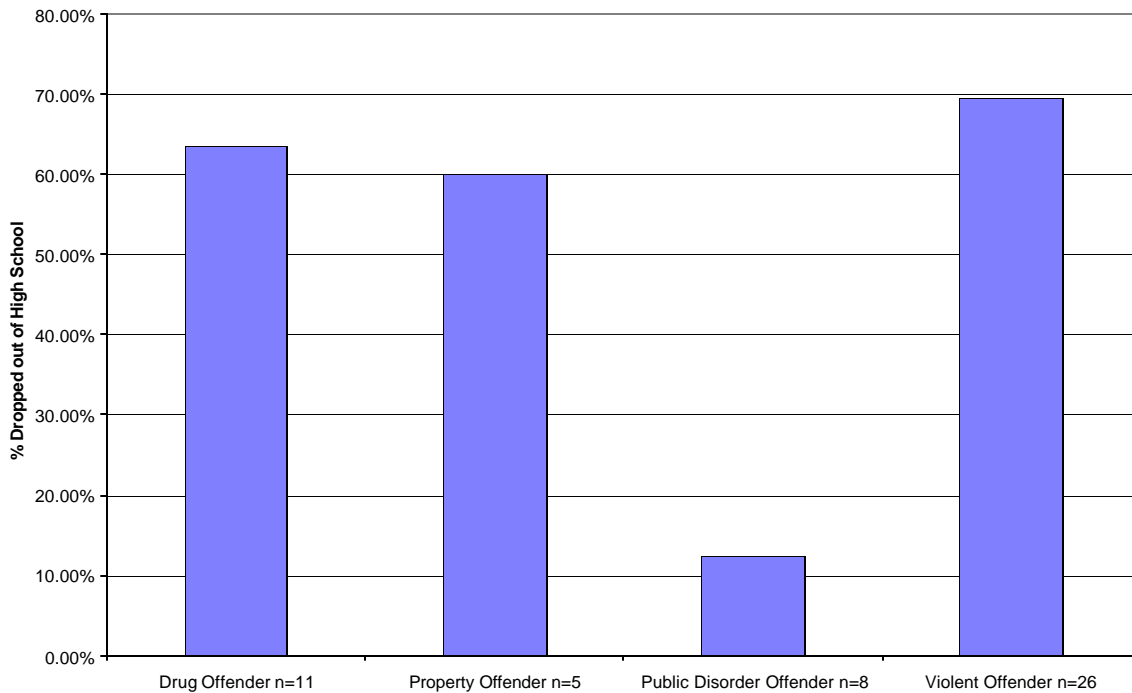
58%(29) of gang members in the sample are High School dropouts.

School information is based on either current school grade at time of PSI, if gang member is of school age or information pertaining to the last year subject attended school, if subject dropped out or is over school age.

13 gang members were placed out of district school, 14 were placed in special education.

**Information regarding special education was not available for 23 cases.*

High School Dropout & Type of Crime



63.6%(7) of the drug offenders, 60%(3) of the property offenders, 12.5%(1) of the property offenders and 69.2% (18) of the violent offenders are high school dropouts.

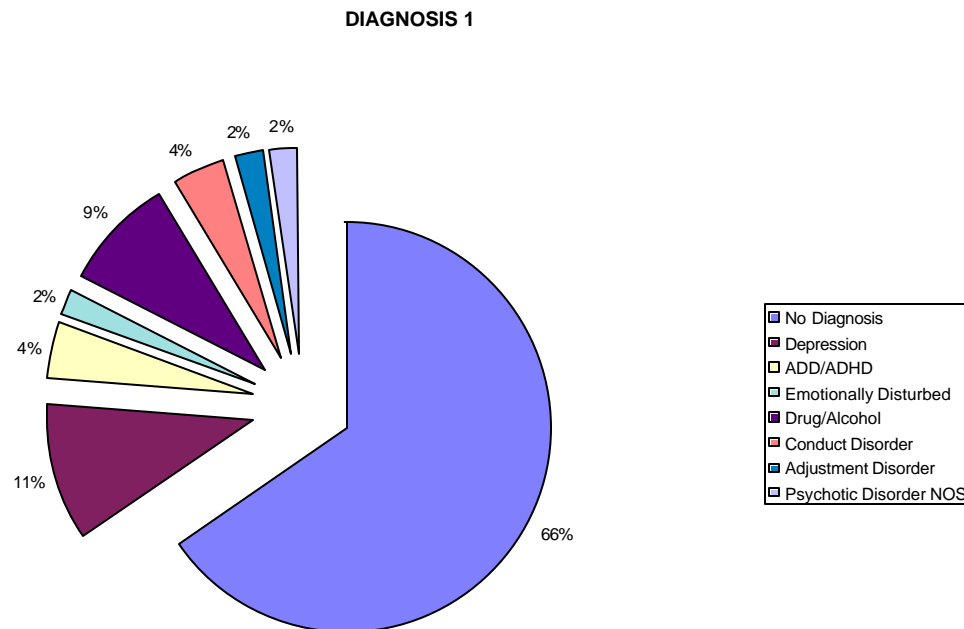
Mental Health and the Gang Member:

15 % had at least one out of home placement. The out of home placements consisted of Department of Social Service placements, DFY placements, psychiatric placements, and drug or alcohol treatment placements.

The number of psychiatric/psychological diagnosis ranged from none to 4.

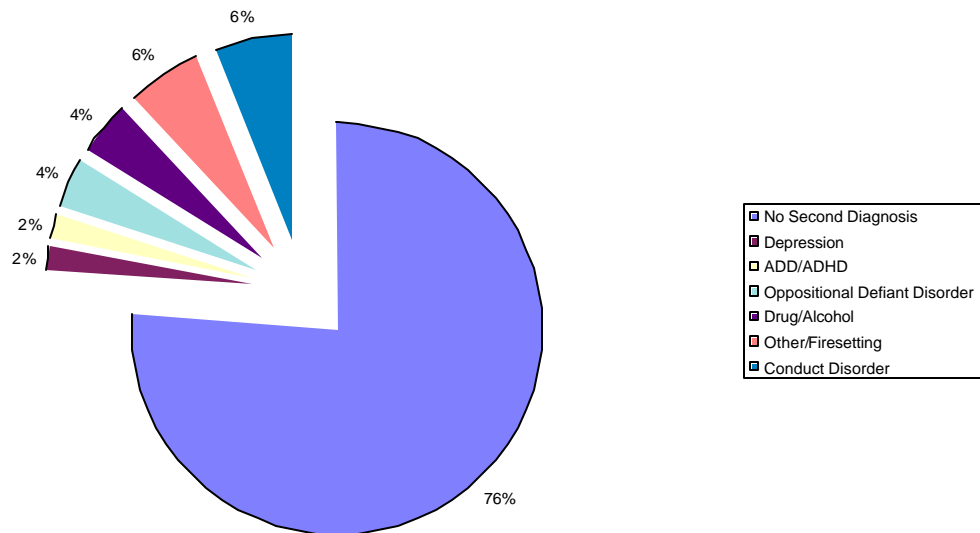
34% (18) have at least one diagnosis. 24%(12) have a second diagnosis, 10% (5) have a third diagnosis, and 2%(1) have a fourth diagnosis.

Of the first diagnosis: 66% have no diagnosis, 10%(5) depression, 4%(2) ADD/ADHD, 8% (4) Drug or Alcohol related, 6% (3) Conduct Disorder, 2 % emotionally disturbed, 2% psychotic disorder, 2% (1) adjustment disorder.



The subjects with second diagnosis had diagnosis' of depression, ADD/ADHD, Drug/Alcohol, Conduct disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder or other/ firesetting

Diagnosis 2



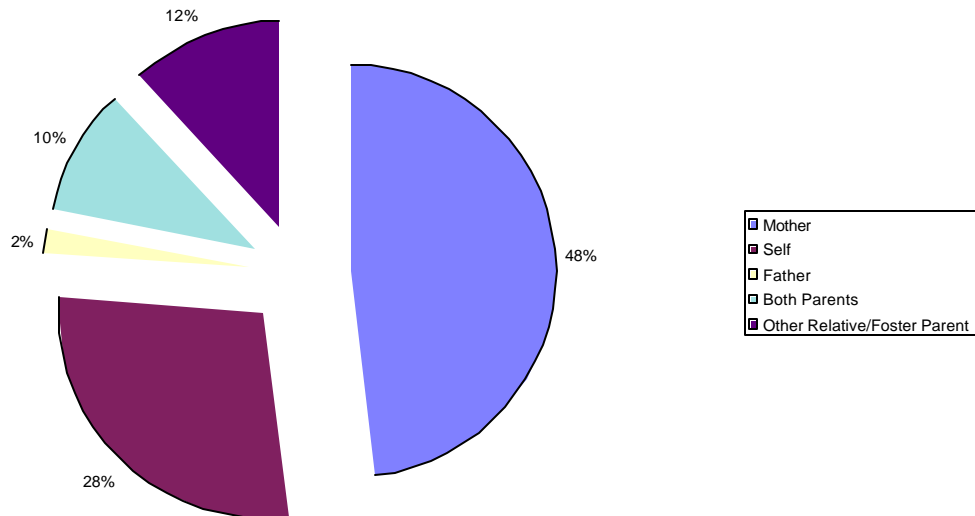
94% have no third diagnosis of the 6% (4) diagnosed- 4% (2) depression, 2% (1) drug/alcohol related and 2% (1) Conduct disorder.

98% have no fourth diagnosis. 2% (1) has a diagnosis of adjustment disorder.

Family information

The person typically responsible for the gang member is his mother 48% (24). 28% (14) indicate the gang member is responsible for himself. (*Subject may reside at home, but be of age*) 12% (10) listed another relative or foster parent as responsible. Only 5 cases or 10% were both parents responsible for the gang member. The father was responsible for the 2% (1) of the gang members.

Person Responsible for Gang Member



Of the 50-gang members in our study only 5 or 10% lived with both parents.

The number of family members living with the gang member at the time the Investigation report ranged from none to 8 people.

The mean number of family members residing with the gang member is 2.92.

88% or 44 live with one or more siblings (*including half siblings and stepsiblings*)

Family not living with the gang member

**Information in this section pertains to people who lived in the home prior to and since the PSI (pre-sentence investigation) for current charges.*

The mean number of significant family members not living with the gang member is 3.

30% (15) have a mother residing outside the current family setting. 58% (29) have a father residing outside the current family setting. 18% have both parents residing outside the current family setting. Of the mothers not living with the subjects, 80% lived at another address, 6% were in prison and 13% were deceased at the time of the current charge, and the whereabouts of 1% were unknown. Of the fathers not living with the subjects, 76% lived at another address, 13% were in prison, 7% were deceased, 3% were in the hospital and the whereabouts of 1% was unknown.

Family Problems:

24% of the gang members in the sample have at least one relative in prison.

26% (13) gang members experienced the death of a close family member, 10% (5) experienced physical abuse by a parent, 10% (5) experienced one or more serious family illness, 30% (15) have one or more serious family problems and 1 case or 2% experienced sexual abuse.

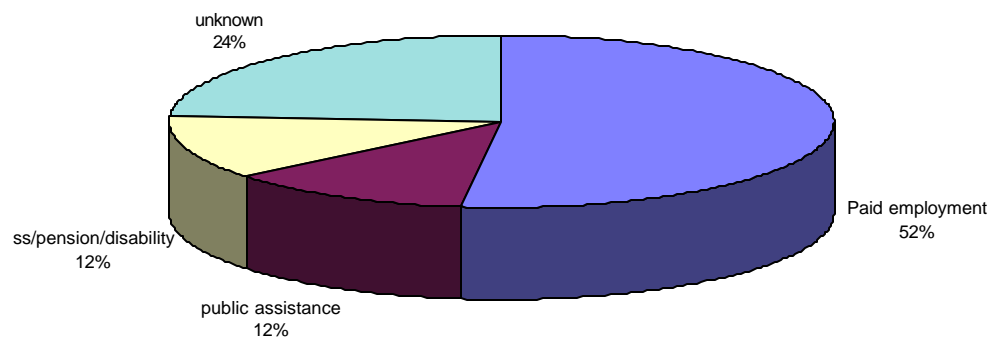
Of the family members incarcerated:

14% (7) a brother is incarcerated, 8% (4) a father is incarcerated, and 2% (1) a mother is incarcerated. (*At time of Investigation report.*)

Family Income:

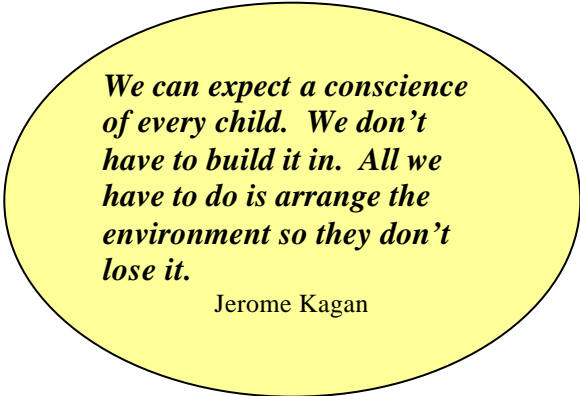
Household income from paid employment 52% (26), from public assistance 12% (6), from SS/pension/disability 12% (6) and unknown 24% (12).

Source of Household Income



c. Youth Gang Case Histories Probation Supervision

Case #1:
Public Disorder Offender



We can expect a conscience of every child. We don't have to build it in. All we have to do is arrange the environment so they don't lose it.

Jerome Kagan

A is a 17 year old, African American male. He is charged with criminal contempt for violating an order of protection issued for his mother. He has a history of violence towards family members, schoolmates, and animals resulting in 4 prior offenses. His first involvement with the criminal justice system was at the age of 15 when his mother took out a Person in Need of Supervision due to his violent, ungovernable and incorrigible behavior. He has not cooperated with therapists, often refusing to attend counseling and has been uncooperative while on probation supervision.

A lives with his mother and 19 year old half sister. A's mother was married to his half sister's biological father, however that relationship dissolved due to his drug use and subsequent break down. A's mother killed one of his siblings when she was still an infant and the cause of death was battered child's syndrome. At which time CPS became involved with the surviving child removing her from the home. She was placed with her maternal grandmother, as was A after his birth. They lived with their grandmother for three years while his mother completed therapy and probation. A's mother and his biological father were never married and A has no contact with his father.

A has a history of violent behavior towards others. He has been especially violent towards his family. He has threatened to kill his mother and sister on several different occasions. He has pointed a loaded BB gun at his mother's head, threatened his sister with a knife, throws objects at his mother when she asks him to do chores and uses profanities regularly. His sister at times barricades herself in her room frightened of her brother. He has a history of abusing family pets including choking a puppy until it died.

At school A has numerous problems, academic failure, truancy, multiple handicapping, low level intellectual functioning and several suspensions for endangering the safety of others. He is currently reading at a 4.2 grade level. A alleges he was bullied at school from 8th grade and uses this as a rationale for his explosive temper.

A was diagnosed at the age of three as hyperactive. Most recently, A is diagnosed as a polysubstance abuser, with conduct and dysthymic disorder. His treatment has been sporadic and inconsistent with minimal progress. He repeatedly minimizes and denies his problems.

A is a verbally and physically abusive young man with a history of violent behavior. All attempts at intervention have failed, so far. His pattern of aggressive behavior paired with his limited intellectual functioning make him a potent threat to himself as well as others.

Case # 2

Public Disorder Offender

G is a 15 year old African American male. This is his first offense. He was a passenger in a car reported stolen. He comes from an intact family situation in which he resides with his working parents and two employed siblings. G's mother indicates he gets along well with his siblings and has not been a difficult child.

School records indicate G has trouble academically, due to both his lack of ability and effort. He has been excessively late to class, truant and had to repeat the 9th grade. There is no history of psychological treatment or evaluation and G denies drug/alcohol use.

Case # 3

Property Offender

E is a 16-year-old Hispanic male with 3 prior offenses. He committed the current offense with his older brother who is currently incarcerated. He is the third in a sibling group of five. His two younger siblings are in foster care because their mother is unable to care for them. His father died of a debilitating disease when he was 14 years old. His mother remarried the following year and his mother reports E and her husband have a good relationship. Both E's mother and his step father are at risk of developing a life threatening debilitating disease, and the mother has become ill and recently developed cancer. E's mother and father were substance abusers. All of the children have been in and out of foster care since E was 12 years old, due to the parents drug abuse. There has been a lengthy involvement of Child protective services. E has lived with a relative, a group home and multiple foster homes. He has a history of running away. At home he is described as a mild discipline problem. He spends his time listening to music about death and dying.

Currently, E's mother has failed to enroll him in school. The last year he attended school he failed two classes but reports he attended school regularly, without any discipline problems.

E showed no remorse for his actions. He believes he is unable to obtain employment and the fastest way for him to make money is from burglary.

Case # 4

Violent Offense

D is an 18 year old male from Peru. He moved to the United States when he was 4 years old and has no prior offenses. He lives at home with his mother, father and sister. Prior to his current violent offense, D and the victim had a fight and several days later D was cut in the face by the victim, requiring a large number of stitches which provoked him into a retaliatory action. He currently expresses a great deal of remorse.

He attends BOCES as well as regular school, and has no mental health issues indicated in his record. He denies using alcohol use but admits to using marijuana. D displays a lack of good judgment and poor impulse control. However, he has an intact supportive family and has held down summer jobs for the last 3 years.

Case # 5

Drug Offender

E is a 22-year-old African American male who lives with his mother and 2 half sisters. He has 9 prior offenses-4 drug related-2 property-and 2 public disorder offenses.

E's parents were never married; his sibling group contains no sibling with the same father. His half brother is currently incarcerated. E has two children by two different women. His work history is sporadic. His living arrangements are unstable and consequently he has moved several times in one year. He is a high school drop out who is pursuing a GED. He abuses drug and alcohol and has limited insight about his drug and alcohol problems.

Case # 6

Drug Offender

F is an 18-year-old Caucasian male incarcerated at the time of his Investigation report. This current offense is his third felony offense in addition to being involved with Family Court as a Juvenile. Prior to his incarceration he lived with his mother and stepfather. He has 6 half sisters, 2 half brothers, a stepsister and a stepbrother. His mother was never married to his biological father and has married twice, once prior to his birth. F reported his natural father died in a car accident in 1991, however further investigation revealed his father is alive, working on one year of sobriety after drug and alcohol problems.

F was close with his grandparents growing up and their deaths affected him strongly. His mother was hospitalized for a nervous breakdown when he was a pre adolescent.

F attended many different schools while growing up. Some changes resulted from family movement and some were due to his placement in various residential treatment facilities and various group homes since the age of 8. Some of the placements were due to CPS involvement and some due to F's own actions. He has a history of problems in school starting in the second grade. His problems include truancy, academic failures, suspensions both from

school and the bus, due to verbal abuse, misbehavior, and fighting with peers. At age 11 F scored in the superior range of intellectual functioning on the WISC R intelligence test. He obtained a Full scale IQ of 128, performance IQ 118 and a verbal IQ of 133. Although he only completed 8th grade, reading scores measured a 12.9 grade reading level.

F has history of mental health issues dating back to the age of 8, when he began counseling. He has poor self-esteem and as a pre adolescent reported hearing “evil voices” and seeing “the devil”. He has been on and off psychotropic medications since the age of 11. Mental health professionals describe him as, “a young man with superior intellectual capacity, coupled with serious emotional problems, leading to impulsivity and volatility under stress.”

Case # 7

Violent Offender

G is a 20-year-old Hispanic male. He was arrested for a violent offense in which his victim sustained serious injuries. He was arrested with 8 others. He has 3 prior/subsequent violent offenses, and shows no remorse for the current offense.

G is the oldest of a sibling group of three. He lives with 5 other family members. All of which have steady employment. He is a citizen of El Salvador and his primary language is Spanish. He was expelled from his high school for excessive fighting. He has steady employment. He speaks openly about his affiliation with his gang, explaining he joined shortly after his arrival into the United States. His family was very concerned and sent him back to El Salvador in an attempt to stop his gang activities. This attempt was unsuccessful and he continues to be heavily involved in violent gang activity.

Case #8

Drug offender

H is a 20-year-old African American male. H has 10 prior offenses. His criminal involvement began at the age of 15 and has continued over the years. Officials described him as “an out of control kid”. He has drug charges; property related charges and public disorder charges. His gang has a history of illegal drug activities.

H’s family is currently in emergency housing. His mother is hospitalized with a long-term undisclosed illness. He lives with his mother and 4 siblings and a niece. His mother has been involved in the criminal justice system and a substance abuse treatment program. She was incarcerated for several years and also was in alcohol rehab for a significant period of time. H and his siblings were in foster care for several years. His sister also has a history of substance abuse.

H began smoking marijuana when he was 15 years old and he continues to do so up to the present day. He uses marijuana daily and denies any other drug or alcohol use. He has no steady work history. His academic record is poor. He was frequently truant and dropped out

in the 10th grade. His troubles in school were due in part to his family's frequent moving. He is labeled mentally retarded and classified as learning disabled.

H expresses no remorse for his current illegal activity and described his previous incarceration as, "no big deal".

Case # 9

Violent offender

M is a 19 year old Caucasian male with no prior offenses. He was arrested with one co-defendant. He resides with an intact family consisting of his working parents and 2 sisters. He shows little remorse for his actions.

M graduated from high school and is currently attending college. He is supported by family, but is looking for part time work. M began drinking alcohol at the age of 17. He reports drinking once a month and admits he smoked marijuana a couple of times. The current offense resulted from M and his friends trying to resolve a dispute between the gang to which they both belong and a rival gang.

Case # 10

Violent Offender

N is a 14 year old Hispanic male, interviewed at a Division for Youth facility, at the time of the investigation report. N has one prior offense- a property offense.

He lives with his mother, sister, aunt and cousin. His parents separated when he was 11. Both of his parents work and he visits his father, however it is unclear how often. His mother reports he is a good son, who listens to her and does not present any unusual behavior problems.

In the 8th grade N was suspended for carrying a knife and he never returned to school. His rationale for carrying the knife was for protection purposes.

N denies drug/ alcohol use and has no history of mental health issues. He is remorseful for the current offense.

VI. SPECIAL YOUTH GANG ISSUES

Special ‘youth gang’ issues and research questions are addressed in this section. In addressing these issues, the most recent empirical research findings are used. The reader is cautioned that the relevancy of the findings **depends** on the **type of gang** in questions, the definition of gang utilized, and according to the jurisdiction analyzed. There is clearly a difference between characteristics of the major hard-core, urban street gang and the rural, loosely organized posse. However, there are many commonalities between type of region if the dynamics of the same type of gang is being compared.

1. Gangs & Crime

Gang membership plays a substantial role in increasing the level of criminal and delinquent behavior. The group context of gang behavior may provide support and opportunities for its members to engage in both more illegal behavior as well as more serious illegal behavior.

G. David Curry & Scott H. Decker (1998)

Recent research findings clearly demonstrate that there is a strong relationship between gang membership and delinquent behavior, especially serious and violent behavior (Browning, Thornberry, & Porter, 1999). Gang membership has a strong impact on incidence of violence, even when other risk factors such as poverty, delinquent peers and prior violence factors are controlled for. **This suggests that the norms and group dynamics of the gang facilitated delinquent and violent behavior.**

2. Gangs & Drugs

The relationship between gangs and illegal drug use and sales is also a strong one. **The NIJ Comparative Study of Criminal Behavior, Youth Gang and At-Risk Groups** is exploring the differences between criminal behavior of youth gang members and non-gang, but similarly at-risk groups (Huff, October 1998). **This research shows that gang members in each of the survey sites are much more likely to sell drugs than non-gang at-risk youth. However, both gang members and at-risk youths reported that youth gangs do not control drug trafficking in their jurisdictions.** Adult gangs are more likely to control drug trafficking than youth gangs.

Also, the results of the 1996 National Youth Gang Survey indicate that on average, 43 percent of the drug sales involved gang members, although most respondents reported gang member involvement in the high and low ends of the spectrum. Almost half of the jurisdictions in large cities and small cities reported that gang members were not very involved in drug sales.

Additionally, the majority of jurisdictions in the West and Northeast indicated that gang members were not very involved in drug sales.

So how can we make sense of these seemingly conflicting findings? There are clearly two competing views about the role of gangs in drug sales. The first view argues that gangs are involved in drug sales in very substantial and direct ways. However, the second view sees the link between gangs and drug sales as much more casual. The truth lies somewhere in between and depends on the region, the jurisdiction and the type of gang. Youth gang members use and sell drugs at a greater rate than similarly, at-risk youth, but these gangs and members do not control drug sales in most jurisdictions and in some areas are not major players.

3. Assessing In-School Gang Activity

*Students who are gang members
Claim the school as their turf.*

Spergel, 1994

According to a recent school survey in Suffolk County, only 1.5% of the schools identified gangs as a serious problem now. However, 16.8% identified gang activity as an emerging problem.

Gang involvement in our nation's schools is substantial and appears to be increasing. However, in a recent survey of Suffolk County's school districts, conducted by the Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission and released in May 1999, gangs **were not** identified as a serious problem at this time in Suffolk's schools. Only 1.5% of the seventy school districts identified gang involvement as a serious problem. However, **16.8%** identified gang activity as an emerging problem. An emerging problem is defined as an area of increasing concern within the school or district. Incidents may be infrequent but appear to be on the rise.

Therefore, although most of Suffolk County's schools were not experiencing gang problems similar to urban centers or schools in the Western part of the Country, **18.3%** identified gangs as an existing serious problem or an emerging problem. (Ebbighausen, 1999).

4. Gang Proliferation and Migration

*The proliferation of youth gangs since 1980 has fueled the public's
fear and magnified possible misconceptions about youth gangs*

Cherly L. Maxon (1998)

The proliferation of youth gangs nationally since 1980 has increased concern that inner-city, gang members were migrating to suburban and rural settings in order to find new markets for drug distribution and criminal activity. In the early 1990's, a significant increase in gang activity was actually reported by

suburban and rural areas. This clearly increased the public's fear regarding gang proliferation. Also, youth gang proliferation increased at the same time that youth homicides and violence increased sharply. But what actually is the role of gang migration on gang proliferation?

First of all, the term "gang proliferation" indicates the increase in communities reporting the existence of gangs and gang problems (Knox et al., 1996). While gangs have existed in various forms, degrees, and locations in the United States for many decades, the sheer volume of cities and towns documenting recent gang activity cannot be denied. Gangs exist in locations previously unaffected and attract a larger proportion of adolescents than in the past.

However, the already difficult task of defining gangs is compounded when the relationship between gang migration and proliferation is addressed. Gang migration – the movement of gang members from one area to another – has been measured with increasing frequency nationally. However, the relationship between gang migration and proliferation is not clearly understood at the present time. Additional empirical research is needed before this research question is answered.

Locally, the issue was explored during this analysis but the results are inconclusive. In addition to the total 951 gang members residing in Suffolk County, there were **210** identified out-of-County gang members active in Suffolk and another **235** gang members without a definite Suffolk County residence. Therefore, the exact role of migration in the proliferation of youth gangs in Suffolk County is unknown.

Gang members active in Suffolk County during 1998 and 1999 include residents of Nassau County, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Westchester County, New Jersey, South Carolina and other jurisdictions. Although the current results are only preliminary, evidence does exist that gang migration is at least partially responsible for the ongoing proliferation of gangs in Suffolk County.

5. Graffiti and Economics

Gang graffiti tells everyone who is in the gang, who is challenging whom, what territory the gang operates in, and who is trying to move or expand.

Developed as part of the emerging hip-hop culture, tagging has taken on a life of its own. What was once a tool for street gangs to stake out their turf is now considered sport by a growing number of youth.

Bureau of Justice Assistance – Nancy E. Gist
Addressing Community Gang Problems

Graffiti are drawings, marks or writings on public surfaces. The person who makes graffiti today is called a "tagger" and he or she puts graffiti on places that are visible to the public and does not belong to the tagger. There is an

important difference between two major categories of graffiti. **Tagger graffiti**, or what some people still call street art, are personal expressions of the taggers, and are an end in themselves, not meant to be a threat of something else. “**Gang graffiti**, on the other hand, are intended to represent the existence of a gang in the area and they transmit a threat of gang violence in the neighborhood.” (BJA, **Addressing Community Gang Problems**, p. 31)

Gang graffiti tells everyone who is in the gang, who is challenging whom, what territory the gang operates in and who is trying to move or expand. **Because of the threat of intimidation and violence, it is recommended that a policy of prompt removal of graffiti be followed.** This strategy has worked in many communities. The cost of graffiti vandalism is often substantial in certain communities both in a monetary basis and in terms of communicating loss of control and fear in a neighborhood. A single act of vandalism can cost tens of thousands of dollars. In addition, graffiti vandalism can actively contribute to the economic decline of neighborhoods. When businesses look for a site for expansion they often avoid areas plagued with graffiti and vandalism. Therefore, all types of graffiti vandals must be strongly discouraged.

Effective responses to the graffiti problem include establishing a strong graffiti policy, reducing the availability of graffiti tools, conducting removal campaigns and programs, target hardening, providing alternatives to taggers, and encouraging public responsibility and involvement.

6. Incarceration and Detention Problems

There is growing evidence that jails, prisons, and state training schools are prime recruitment centers for gang membership. The influence of gangs during imprisonment is of growing concern because imprisonment apparently strengthens the bond between gang members. For many, prison and jail have become a natural extension of gang life and gangs can control the life of their members to a great extent while in jail or prison. Loyalty is demanded and errant behavior is often ruthlessly enforced.

Gangs offer non-gang members protection if they join the gang while in prison and intimidation and violence if they do not. The choice is clear for many adolescents who often become loyal gang members while incarcerated in order to survive. Conflicts between gangs in jail and prison is a natural dynamic since the struggle for control, influence, power, drugs and money continues in the lockup. (Curry & Decker, 1998).

7. Female Gang Involvement

Males dominate gang membership. According to the **1996 National Youth Gang Survey**, females accounted for approximately 11% of gang membership nationally, and the regional variation in the gender of gang members was

minimal. This estimate is actually high compared to previous studies. In the first national survey of gang problems, Walter Mill (1975) found that there was **less than 10% female gang membership** in all of the cities responding to the survey. However, although males are disproportionately involved in gangs, there is a growing involvement and evidence that gang crime is being committed increasingly by females. However, there has always been a male-centered focus on gang research and research on female gangs, gang membership, gang crime and gang dynamics is limited.

Sexual exploitation of female gang members has been reported by numerous studies, from the 1920's to 1999. The issue being studied now is what is the nature and prevalence of female gang crime and what are the dynamics of female gangs.

In Suffolk County the results are primarily male centered with only 2 females out of the **193** probation gang members or 1%. Confirmed or suspected female gang members are almost non-existent in Suffolk County at the present time. Further research is required in this area.

VII. PROMISING YOUTH GANG APPROACHES

*We have too many high-sounding words,
and too few actions that correspond with them.*

Abigail Adams (1744-1818)

1. Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a problem-solving approach that provides a framework for action, while defining the roles of all of the participants in the process. Strategic planning requires the clear identification and agreement of goals and objectives and the setting of a realistic time frame for reaching them. Strategic planning results in a blueprint for action for the future.

The strategic planning process currently in process with the Suffolk County Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Commission is addressing youth crime in general, and youth gang proliferation in particular. A coalition of governmental representatives, law enforcement agencies, youth service providers, health and social service officials and other concerned citizens and professionals have collaborated to develop and implement an effective strategic plan. Strategic planning enables Commission members to develop the procedures necessary to achieve the goals and objectives through collaboration, coordination and cooperation. Strategic planning consists of six elements: 1) Mission Formulation, 2) Organization Assessment, 3) Strategic Objectives Development, 4) Action Plan Development, 5) Implementation, and 6) Evaluation.

2. Gang Suppression Prototype

The most frequent response to gang proliferation and gang crime in the nation is the Suppression Prototype. Suppression techniques include arrest, special targeted prosecution, incarceration, probation intensive supervision, shared gang intelligence communication, and networking among criminal justice agencies to the exclusion of non-justice agencies.

The National Institute of Justice funded a survey (Curry et al. 1992) of the police departments in the largest 79 U.S. cities and found that over two-thirds (67%) reported specialized police gang units. Spergel's (1995) analysis of evaluation of the suppression model reports that the strategy of increased and targeted suppression has not, by itself, been adequate to reduce the gang problem and return 'control of the streets'. Curry (1998) reports that currently suppression strategies are rarely used alone in responding to gang crime problems.

3. Prevention and Intervention Approaches

Most of the gang prevention efforts in the last decade have been unevaluated. However, there are some recent demonstration projects that are promising.

First of all, Thornberry (1993) reports that in Rochester, New York one-third of the adolescent males in their cohort reported being a gang member at some point before the end of high school. That same one-third committed 90% of the serious crime in the cohort, including 80% of violent crimes and 83% of drug sales. The hypothesis that **gangs** cause crime is gaining increased support. Therefore, by **preventing** youngsters from joining gangs, youth crime in general and gang crime in particular would be reduced.

Unfortunately, very little valid empirical research exists that demonstrates that traditional social intervention programs are effective (Sherman - **Preventing Crime**, Office of Justice Programs 1997, 3-13). Klein (1995) evaluated a prevention strategy of using detached workers who encouraged gang members to drop out of gangs. Gang arrests declined 35% while the workers were providing counseling but the rates increased when the youth workers were no longer providing services. As a result, Klein reports that gangs "cannot long be controlled by attacks on symptoms alone; community structure and capacity must also be targeted". The potential impact of developing effective prevention and intervention programs is great, but effective program designs are elusive. However, one program model from Boston is encouraging. Results of a gang-related project to reduce juvenile firearms crime are encouraging. Sherman (1997) reports that an **effort to deter gang-related gun violence by massive police response to any shootings is supported by probation officers who have the statutory authority to search probationers**

at will. The probation officers work with police to inform gang members that any shootings will get anyone even remotely involved into a lot of trouble. This strategy has apparently given some gang members as a convenient excuse to avoid planned conflicts.

Since many of the known youthful gang members exhibit multiple attitudinal, behavior, substance abuse, and mental health problems, many prevention and intervention approaches attempt to reduce the negative impact of these risk factors by strengthening the individual's protective factors. Essentially, these programs try to treat the underlying causes of crime and delinquency and fill the void with positive, meaningful experiences. Additional research is need as to the impact of this approach on gang crime and gang proliferation.

4. Comprehensive Community-wide Approaches to Gangs

In 1988, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) established the National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program which began a process that would identify the most promising approaches and strategies for addressing the youth gang problem. By 1995, this resulted in the development of the prototypes and strategies known as the Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gangs or information known as the "Spergel model". The Spergel model is a dynamic approach with an extremely flexible format for responding to gang problems at the community level. There are ten component models, designed to be tailored to the special needs of each community. Key agencies for all the models are the police, grass roots organizations and some form of job program.

At the same time, a **social development model that incorporated the key influences of family, school and community and emphasized protective and risk factors was developed** (Hawkins, 1996). If serious, chronic, and violent offending was to be reduced, it was concluded that the juvenile justice system would have to become part of a comprehensive continuum of services and sanctions. Protective factors would have to be enhanced, and risk factors would have to be diminished or at least mediated. The Comprehensive Strategy, as it is generally known, became official OJJDP policy. (Curry & Decker, 1998).

VIII. Current Suffolk County Response

1. The Comprehensive Strategy

As described in this report previously, Suffolk County, through the efforts of the County Executive's Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission has adopted the 'Comprehensive Strategy' as its approach to reduce youth crime during the next decade. The strategy is guided by five general imperatives:

- **Strengthen the family** in its role to instill values, and provide guidance and support to children;
- **Support core social institutions** in their roles to develop capable, mature, and responsible youths;
- **Prevent delinquency** because prevention is the most cost effective approach to combating youth crime;
- **Intervene immediately** and effectively when delinquent behavior is first manifested; and
- **Control and identify the small group of serious violent and chronic offenders** through a range of graduated sanctions, including placement in secure facilities.

The strategy rests on a risk-focused prevention model which is based on known risk factors existing in a community. Complementing the prevention component is a risk-focused continuum of sanctions for juvenile offenders covering immediate responses for minor misconduct, an array of intermediate sanctions for serious habitual offenders, and effective, secure treatment programs for the violent few. **Specifically regarding the prevention of youth gang proliferation, the overall strategy includes crime control and crime prevention components. Prevention, intervention and suppression are combined in one overall 'comprehensive strategy'.**

2. Suffolk Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission Recommendations

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview - As a result of the strategic planning process, the Suffolk County Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission developed five categories of recommendations regarding the four domains of school, community, family and the individual and they are as follows:

- I. Administrative/Systemic
- II. Prevention
- III. Intervention/Treatment
- IV. Legislative/Regulatory Changes
- V. Structural/Economic

I. Administrative/Systemic Recommendations

- 1. Establish an ongoing Suffolk County Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission to assist in the implementation of the recommendations of the Countywide blueprint for youth crime reduction. Membership would conform to OJJDP/DCJS requirements for planning advisory groups.
- 2. Establish technical assistance teams and services to assist “high-impact” areas in the County; as well as all others in developing effective programs and in securing needed funding to combat youth crime delinquency.
- 3. Hold at least one annual Countywide Youth Issues Symposium/Conference that addresses priority needs, solutions and finances.
- 4. Establish an Interagency Curriculum Development Subcommittee of the Juvenile Crime Commission that would design needed programs for delinquency and youth crime prevention.
- 5. Design and implement an integrated Youth Crime MIS System (both East and West Ends) that can be used for strategic planning, and grantsmanship, as well as foster interagency collaboration and cooperation.
- 6. Develop and implement alternative funding strategies that can be used to leverage non-traditional funding, resulting in additional State and Federal funding sources.

7. Continue the empirical research and statistical analysis of the nature and prevalence of youth crime in Suffolk County.
8. Continue the literature search and research analysis of exemplary youth crime intervention programs and incorporate the results into existing County programs, as well as new program designs.

II. Prevention Recommendations

9. Identify “high-risk” or “high-impact” areas in Suffolk County based on empirical evidence and analysis and target resources and programs to these areas.
10. Develop and evaluate exemplary programs and strategies, so that these prevention initiatives are available to all jurisdictions that request them.
11. Develop a full range of mentoring programs for both prevention and intervention populations.
12. Expand “Safe-Havens” for youth by initiating innovative programs that use existing school and community facilities for before and after school, as well as evening activities.
13. Implement and evaluate the A.C.T. (Assertive Community Treatment) Team Outreach Approach for “high-risk” youth and their families. A.C.T. provides psychological, psychiatric, therapeutic and case management services for youth and their families.
14. Develop a host of multi-disciplinary wellness and prevention services that would offer an intensification of services to the most at-risk children.
 - Provide additional Public Health nurses for home visits to prevent neglect or abuse of newborns in high-risk families.
 - Encourage early child care providers to meet clearly identified needs.
 - Attain 100% Head Start Enrollment.
15. Establish methods to increase the development of the values of our youth. (Integrity, Honesty, Responsibility, Restraint, Caring, Equality and Social Justice)

16. Develop and implement outreach strategies for “hard-to-reach” youth in order to involve them in Youth Development Programs.
17. Educate youth, School, Parents and Community leaders about the prevention services that are available in the County.

III. Intervention and Treatment

18. Improve the Secure Juvenile Detention System by developing sufficient and guaranteed remand capacity for Suffolk County youth.
19. Develop Comprehensive Aftercare Services for youth returning to the community after completing a sentence of placement in a Residential Resource Center, or State Training School; or after return from a period of incarceration.
20. Based on the results of the Countywide empirical research and needs assessment efforts, increase appropriate sentencing options available to the Courts.
21. Establish ID cards, curfews, and geographic restriction strategies for young probationers, and evaluate the results.
22. Establish a Countywide policy and interagency strategy of zero tolerance of underage drinking.
23. Increase alcohol and cigarette sting operations around school zones.
24. Establish a Countywide Youth Gang Intelligence Linkage and Task Force between Gang Intelligence Units in Suffolk County. (This initiative involves both preventive and intervention concerns.)
25. Develop additional Alternative Schools for violent, disruptive or dangerous youth.
26. Develop, implement and evaluate alternatives to ‘out-of-school’ suspensions.
27. Develop, implement and evaluate effective truancy reduction programs.

28. Appropriate funds to pilot a FINS program for the PINS population.

IV. Legislative/Regulatory Changes

29. Advocate for the adoption of a FINS (Families-In-Need- of Services) law to mandate family involvement with Court-related youth.
30. Change J.D. (Juvenile Delinquent) intake adjustment to allow for a longer 'adjustment period' from the current 60 days to 120 days.
31. Change Special Education regulations to allow the school district greater authority when dealing with dangerous, special education students.
32. Promote stronger discipline in school by restructuring State Education Law 3214 to allow the hearing officer greater discretion in the questioning of witnesses.
33. Increase penalties for anyone selling, giving and/or distributing alcohol or cigarettes to minors.
34. Pass legislation that would earmark a larger percentage of SLA (State Liquor Authority) fines for additional SLA enforcement programs against alcohol and cigarette sales to minors.

V. Structural/Economic

35. Enhance the System of Funding School Mandates.

The current system needs improvement. A new system of funding school mandates that is fair to all children of the State system must be enacted. Such a change will lessen the poverty level of the economically poor districts and potentially reduce the crime rate of those communities.

3. Current Suffolk County Gang Initiatives

A. Gang Reduction Intervention Project (G.R.I.P.)

This project is a highly accountable, control model of intensive intervention for identified gang members and those persistent violent offenders in danger of becoming gang members in Suffolk County. The County was awarded federal, Juvenile Accountability funding in 1999 to implement and evaluate this

program. The major emphasis is on providing close surveillance and supervision of gang members. The components of this project include the following:

- A. Intensive Probation Supervision (35 cases per caseload),
- B. Comprehensive, interagency intelligence and collaboration regarding gang activity,
- C. Specialized training in gang dynamics of project staff,
- D. Frequent drug testing,
- E. Curfews,
- F. Evening hour surveillance and supervision,
- G. Geographic restriction of participant's movement,
- H. Peer association restriction,
- I. Pictured I.D. cards for all participants,
- J. Appropriate referrals for identified dysfunctions, and
- K. Fast-track violations for subsequent criminal behavior

B. Countywide Gang Intelligence Network

Individual Criminal Justice Agencies have developed departmental gang database files in recent years. Information sharing has been an important component, but this information network was not systematic. The County applied for and received federal funding to develop and implement an interagency intelligence network on youth gang activity in Suffolk County. Participants in this collaboration include Probation, the District Attorney, the Police, the County Attorney and the Sheriff's Office. The automation design is configured to provide optimum technical assistance to collect, organize, analyze and report information on the gang population in Suffolk County. The initial database from this effort has been used in this research.

C. Fast Track Prosecution

Another component of Suffolk County's Comprehensive Gang Strategy involves expedited prosecution of gang members and chronic violent offenders. This project is partially federally funded.

D. Probation Gang Awareness Training Program

The Suffolk County Department has developed and is operating a gang awareness educational program that gives training presentation and workshops to practitioners, as well as in-depth 'train-the-trainer' services. A curriculum has been developed that includes detailed information about specific gangs active in Suffolk County.

E. Gang Task Force

Suffolk County is currently operating an interagency gang task force with participants of all of the criminal justice agencies in the County. The Gang Task Force has common goals and objectives and provides a forum for information sharing. In addition, the task force carries out joint collaborative actions required to contain gang proliferation and gang crime.

F. Anti-Graffiti Task Force

The County Executive established an Anti-Graffiti task force in 1993, and this body has been extremely active for the past six years. Task Force members include members of the County Executive's Office, Probation, the Courts, the Police, Youth Bureaus, private citizens, private agencies, SUNY at Stony Brook, County Parks Department, local businesses, Sheriff's Office, the Legislature, MTA Police Department, Medical Examiner's Office, Towns and many others. Since 1993, the Graffiti Task Force has conducted two Expositions/Conferences on graffiti, the last in 1999. Grants have also been secured in order to remove graffiti as soon after the act of vandalism as possible. This effort is an important component of Suffolk County's strategy to prevent youth gang proliferation.

G. Youth Crime Research and Planning Unit

The County Executive has included in his recommended budget the creation of a 'Youth Crime Research and Planning Unit' which will conduct research on the major issues of youth crime and youth gangs and secure funding for additional program implementation. Evaluation of the effectiveness of prevention, intervention and suppression elements of the strategic plan will be conducted by this unit.

Future Directions

There are two major phases of the work of the Suffolk County Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission: strategic planning and implementation. The initial planning phase is complete and the report represents the consensus recommendations, presented to the Honorable Robert J. Gaffney, County Executive.

The next phase of planning will continue throughout 1999 and 2000 and will involve facilitating implementation of the action plan that is designated to reduce youth crime and prevent youth gang proliferation. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the different element of this plan is a major objective of this effort. In addition, gang related research regarding prevention, intervention and suppression issues will be conducted simultaneously.

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APPENDIX A: SOURCES OF GANG RELATED INFORMATION

1. OJJDP's National Youth Gang Center

As part of its comprehensive, coordinated response to America's gang problem, OJJDP funds the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC). NYGC assists State and local jurisdictions in the collection, analysis, and exchange of information on gang-related demographics, legislation, literature, research, and promising program strategies. It also coordinates activities of the OJJDP Gang Consortium – a group of Federal agencies, gang program representatives, and service providers that works to coordinate gang information and programs. For more information contact:

National Youth Gang Center

P.O. Box 12729

Tallahassee, FL 32317

850-385-0600

Fax: 850-385-5356

E-Mail: nygc@iir.com

Internet: www.iir.com/nygc

Information newly available on the Web site includes gang-related legislation by subject and by State and the Youth Gang Consortium Survey of Gang Problems.

Information newly available on the web site includes gang-related legislation by subject and by State and the Youth Gang Consortium Survey of Gang Problems.

2. Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse

Post Office Box 6000

Rockville, MD 20849-6000

800-638-8736

301-519-5212 (fax)

E-mail: askncjrs@ncjrs.org

<http://www.ncjrs.org/ojjhome.htm>

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APPENDIX B:

PROBATION CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING A GANG MEMBER

1. Admits to criminal street gang membership.
2. Is identified as a gang member by a parent/guardian.
3. Resides/frequents a gang's area, adopts a style of dress, hand signs, or tattoos, and associates with known gang members.
4. Is identified as a criminal street gang member by physical evidence such as photographs or other documentation.
5. Is identified as a gang member by a documented reliable informant.
6. Is identified as a gang member by an informant of previously untested reliability and such identification is corroborated by independent informant.
7. Was arrested more than once in the company of identified gang member for offenses which are consistent with usual street gang activity.
8. Was stopped in the company of known criminal street gang members four or more times.

CRITERIA FOR VERIFYING A GANG MEMBER

#1 can be used independently or in combination with #2, #3, and #4 (caution - language may be a barrier).

#2, #3, and #4 are used in a combination of two or more.

#5, #6, #7, and #8 are used to identify suspected gang members. Once someone is suspected, attempt to verify by using #1, #2, #3, and #4.

REMEMBER, IT IS NOT A CRIME TO BE A GANG MEMBER.

IT IS A CRIME TO COMMIT A CRIME.

April 1999